THE JOURNAL OF THE INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM

The Women's Quarterly

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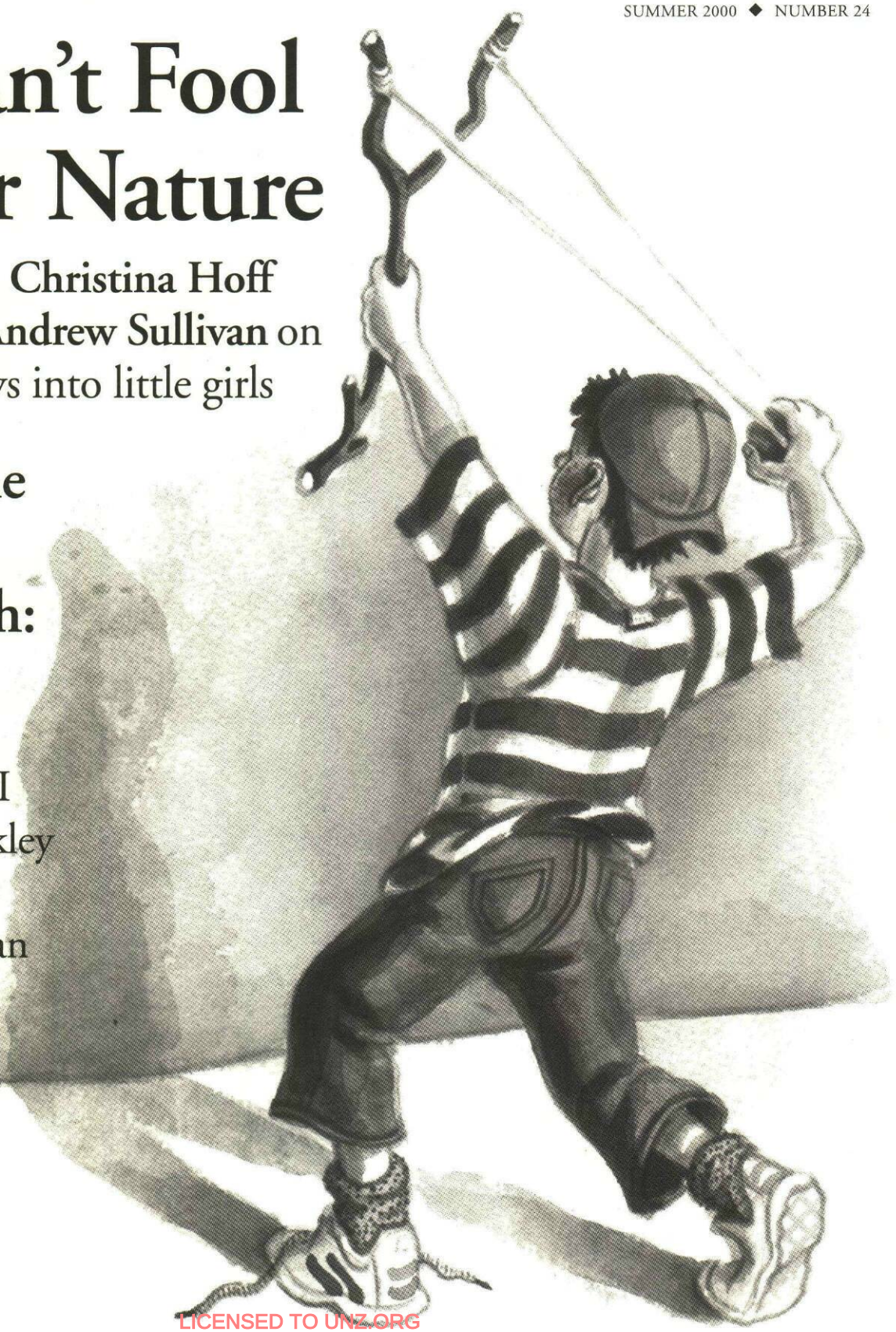
You Can't Fool Mother Nature

John Colapinto, Christina Hoff Sommers, and **Andrew Sullivan** on turning little boys into little girls

Watching the Presidential Debates with:

Michael Barone
Tony Blankley
L. Brent Bozell III
Christopher Buckley
Ann Coulter
James K. Glassman
Terry Golway
Amy Holmes
Laura Ingraham
Mary Matalin
Kate O'Beirne
Philip Terzian



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Diary

Prodigal Daughter

MY MOTHER, a proud non-joiner, was never a Daughter. But she was persuaded to assemble the necessary "papers" for me to become a Child, and for several years I was an active member of the Children of the American Revolution, William Turnbull chapter.

My main memory is of sitting in one of those green-hued living rooms where somebody's great-gramps glowered from above the mantle, while a fellow CAR read from a thrilling article revealing that several of America's Founding Fathers—Tom Paine, in particular, was cited—espoused radical political philosophies.

Shortly thereafter, I found myself espousing radical political philosophies, and I abandoned the Children, seemingly destined never to grow into a Daughter. But people change. I recently got in touch with the Daughters to see if I might transfer "my papers"—the DAR maintains an extensive genealogy library—from the CAR to the DAR.

When I saw *The Patriot*, a superb but curiously ill-reviewed recent movie, I thought of it in terms of my sudden desire to belong to a group once dismissed in an article as "these forgotten WASP ladies." The patriot, Benjamin Martin (Mel Gibson), a courageous South Carolina militia colonel, personifies the DAR motto: God, home, and country. "Lord, let me be fast and accurate," he prays before rescuing his eldest son from twenty Redcoats, with only his two smaller sons to help shoot.

The Daughters are unconcerned with social status—it matters not whether one's revolutionary ancestor was an indentured servant or the Marquis de Lafayette. Only generation by generation proof of lineal descent from a Revolutionary soldier is mandatory, and I joined via Capt. Robert Johnson, a Virginian, who served in the Fayette County Militia.

The DAR is not without a stain on its history. In 1939, it famously refused to let Marian Anderson sing at Constitution Hall because of a "whites only" policy. Principled Daughters, including Eleanor Roosevelt—who arranged for Anderson to sing at the Lincoln Memorial—resigned in protest.

But that is not the whole story. The Daughters nurture something sorely lacking today: love of country. The DAR promotes the study of American history, sponsoring exhibits, essay contests and awards in schools, and hosting teas (yes, teas) to honor excellence in teaching American history. One of the most important things the DAR does is work in naturalization programs for new Americans—an obvious cause for ladies once hailed in a speech by FDR as "my fellow immigrants."

When I e-mailed the DAR chapter in my hometown of Greenville, Mississippi, the reply was so gracious that for a few moments I wanted to move back to the South. A Greenville Daughter informed me that, if by some mishap, the relevant documents were missing, a relative of mine had also traced her lineage to Robert Johnson and I could use her records.

Though I don't know much about Robert's service in the Revolution, I know a lot about his subsequent history, and I love it because it is such an American story.

After the Revolution, Robert, who also fought in the Indian Wars under George Rogers Clark, took his family to Kentucky, where he prospered, serving in the state legislature and as a delegate to Kentucky's Constitutional Conventions of 1790 and '92. Earlier, in 1782, at the fort at Bryant's Crossing, Ky., the Johnsons and other pioneers were surrounded by Indians. Jemima Suggett Johnson, Robert's wife, was, according to an early source, "one of the matrons who made the perilous venture of passing the Indian ambuscade to bring a supply of water from the spring outside the stockade." Some say the ladies sang as they returned with the water. During the battle, a burning arrow hit the cradle of their son Richard. He survived and is credited by many with slaying Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames.

Some family records have "never married" by Richard's name. That probably wasn't true. While serving in the U.S. Senate, he lived openly with an African-American woman named Julia Chinn. She died in 1833, three years before Richard Johnson became vice president of the United States under President Martin Van Buren. A man ahead of his time, Richard shocked Washington society with his attempts to take the couple's daughters to White House receptions. Most likely, Richard and Julia were legally married. I am descended from Richard's brother, Capt. Henry Johnson, who acquired land in Mississippi, after fighting with Jackson at New Orleans.

Although I know these old stories by heart, I didn't want to have to document them again. Fortunately, I received a second e-mail from the Greenville Daughter saying that "my papers" had been located. The e-mail arrived on the Fourth of July. Is this a great country, or what?

~Charlotte Hays

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The Women's Quarterly

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Cover by Sandy McClelland. Cartoon (above) by Charles Jaffé

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Yakety-yak

Watching the fall presidential debates with the experts. A scorecard

The Women's Quarterly asked a distinguished group of journalists for tips on how to watch the presidential debates with eyes wide open. The debates are scheduled for October and will feature a moderator instead of a panel of questioners. The Commission on Presidential Debates, a nonpartisan organization with corporate sponsorship, determines the format with input from the two hostile camps. So pop the popcorn and get ready for the verbal mud wrestling.

Michael Barone

How do you tell who won?

First, don't listen to the spin. In the press rooms at debate sites, representatives of each candidate are ready the instant the debate stops to run out and proclaim their candidate won. They will have talking points, references to specific interchanges, whispered reports of dial-group responses, spin galore. But of course these people are being paid to say their candidate won. They will do so even if it is clear he lost. You can listen to this spin all you want, and some of it will even be right. But it has no more probative value than Bill Clinton's response to the charge that he raped Juanita Broaddrick.

Second, don't pay much attention to the press. I attended the 1992 vice presidential debate in Atlanta. It seemed to me that Dan Quayle beat Al Gore. Time after time, Quayle raised specific facts and argued persuasively that "Bill Clinton has trouble telling the truth" and cannot be trusted; Gore, looking uncomfortable, declined to address the question of Clinton's trustworthiness. Today, as good an indicator of the conventional wisdom as James Fallows can write an article in the *Atlantic* which takes it for granted that Quayle won the debate. But almost no one in the press room at the time would say so. Gore obviously won, they said, though maybe he didn't do quite as well as they thought he would, and perhaps Quayle made a few good points, etc., etc. The press, besides being 90 percent Democratic, had an investment in the ideas that Quayle was an idiot and Gore a genius. They weren't going to let what they had just seen change their minds, at least not very much. So what we got after the debate was pretty much what they would have predicted they would give us before the debate. Garbage in, garbage out. Incidentally, tracking polls showed the Bush-Quayle ticket doing better right after the VP debate than at any other point up to the last weekend of the campaign.

Finally, keep in mind the context of the debate. Voters do not ordinarily suspend judgment about the candidates until the debates. They already have much information, and watch the debates, if they watch, only to learn what they feel they need to know. In 1960 they wanted to know which of these two young men—Kennedy was forty-three, Nixon forty-seven—had a sense of command. In 1976 they wanted to learn more about Jimmy Carter, whom they were leaning toward; he only just clinched the sale. In 1980, they wanted to see if the sixty-nine-year-old Ronald Reagan was up to the job they had already decided they wanted Carter out of; when Reagan said, "There you go again!" they decided he was. In 1984 the only question was whether Reagan was *compos mentis*; he hit that one out of the park. In 1988 and 1992 voters were genuinely curious about the lesser-known candidates; debates probably did matter. In 1996 voters were set on reelecting Bill Clinton; debates mattered not at all.

This year, stay tuned. ◆

Michael Barone is senior writer at U.S. News & World Report, *editor of* The

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Almanac of American Politics *and a regular on* The McLaughlin Group.

Philip Terzian

Do the debates really matter?

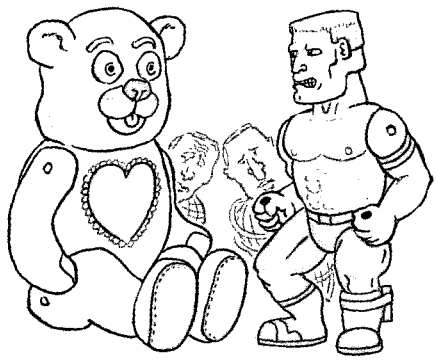
OF COURSE they do—for a seventy-two-hour news cycle. The evening before the debate is spent handicapping ("This is make-or-break for George W. Bush") and the day after is consumed with spin ("Al Gore did what he had to do"). The event itself, however, is entirely meaningless: An exercise in media self-importance and historic irrelevance which, thanks to the efforts of David S. Broder and the League of Women Voters, has become an institution. God help us.

Now ask yourself this question: How would some of our greatest presidents perform in televised debates? Imagine Bernard Shaw asking Dwight Eisenhower what he would do if Mamie had been raped and murdered. Count the seconds Theodore Roosevelt would sit still while being cross-examined by Barbara Walters. Consider the impression his cousin Franklin would make on camera: sporting his naval cape, pince-nez, and tilting his head back while fingering his cigarette holder. The sound bites write themselves for Woodrow Wilson ("Arrogant, professorial") or Abraham Lincoln ("Tells stories instead of answering questions"). Would James Madison have known the price of a quart of milk?

Or think about the great moments in presidential debating. Does anyone recall any particular detail about the 1960 encounters, other than the fact that John Kennedy wore a dark suit, Richard Nixon wore a light suit, and Nixon's five o'clock shadow shone in the klieg lights? How much did we really learn about Ronald Reagan in 1980 ("There you go again") or Walter Mondale in 1984 ("Where's the beef?"). Everyone remembers that Gerald Ford made a terrible gaffe by insisting that Poland was not under Soviet influence; but who today thinks his rival, Jimmy Carter, had a firmer grasp of the Soviet menace?

The truth is that the presidential debates are largely a showcase for preening journalists who ask questions designed to humiliate candidates. Sometimes debates reveal that Challenger X is sexier than Incumbent Y, or that one candidate (Bill Clinton, for example) is better in a parliamentary format than another. But this only proves that glibness, and a well-briefed brain, don't add up to greatness. Of course, my favorite confrontation was in 1976, when the audio collapsed and Ford and Carter stood stone still, not exchanging a syllable, for twenty-seven minutes. When the sound returned, I switched to *The Bionic Woman.* ◆

Philip Terzian writes a syndicated column from Washington for the Providence Journal.



Laura Ingraham

What kind of masculine image should the candidates project?

ONE OF THE dirty secrets of American politics is the extent to which voters want their president to be a "real man." Bush begins with the lead. He's comfortable in rugged settings, he started his own business, and he even owned a major league baseball team. By contrast, Gore has spent practically his whole life in the government, and he seems much more comfortable hugging a tree than chopping one down.

But Gore evidently hopes to win this issue by changing the definition of a "real man." His campaign promotes focus groups in which women conclude that Gore would make a better date (and a better husband) than the supposedly hard-living caveman, George W. Bush. Al Gore will remind us of his time in Vietnam (as a reporter), but he will probably spend more time discussing his concern for his family and his support for "women's issues." Gore's camp will also try to let folks know that their man is smarter than George W. In short, Gore will try to use Bush's strengths against him, to convince voters that Bush represents an outdated form of manliness that's inferior to a modern, sensitive, intelligent guy like Gore.

Of course, every nerd in high-school has tried this same tactic for decades, and has learned the same painful lesson: Cool jocks are simply more popular than decent and brainy guys, no matter how sensitive they might be. Bush will no doubt try to respond to Gore by emphasizing his own sensitivity; he'll remind us of his close relationship to his mother and his devotion to his family. But if he's smart, Bush will also find ways to remind us that he's the candidate who flew fighter planes (in the National Guard), that he's the one who hangs out with baseball players, that he's the one who's actually governed a state (and not just served in Congress). Bush is also the youngest and most vigorous candidate nominated by the GOP since the

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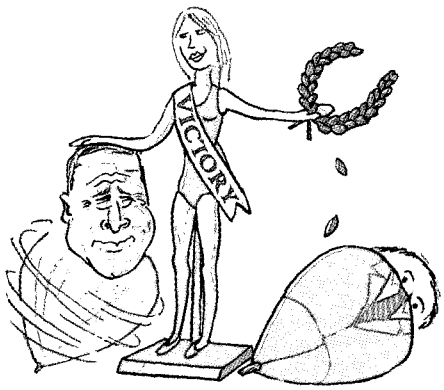
1960s, which should also help his cause.

If Bush overcomes Gore's numerous advantages (the economy and President Clinton) and wins the election, it will no doubt be because he won the masculinity primary. Because no matter how much Americans claim to like serious movies and good love stories, every summer they line up in droves to watch the action heroes. ◆

Laura Ingraham is an MSNBC analyst and author of The Hillary Trap: Looking for Power in All the Wrong Places *(Hyperion).*



Tony Blankley

Can you lose the debate but win the spin?

A TIRED JOKE about the husband caught in *flagrante delicto* by his wife ends with the punch line: "Who are you going to believe, me or your lying eyes?" In these Clinton years, that mentality has been the essence of spin. But in its origins two decades ago, presidential debate spin was a national reinforcement of the objective reality of the debate.

Modern spin arose out of the Republican experience coming out of the 1976 Ford/Carter debate. The overnight polling showed that Ford had won, but five days of distorted network reporting of Ford's discussion of captive nations turned the public's judgment against Ford, and may have cost him the presidency. Stuart Spencer, the brilliant Republican political consultant, recognized that part of the Nixon-developed concept of message control required careful monitoring of post-debate reporting.

This lesson was first applied in the 1980 Reagan/Carter debate, when Lyn Nofziger led a team of Republican senior statesmen in focusing the press' attention on Reagan's adept handling of foreign policy issues. The Carter spinners, including cabinet officials, tried to deliver the message that Reagan would divide the country rich from poor, black from white, Jewish from Christian.

The misleading Carter spin had little effect—Reagan's words and manner belied their spin—while the Republican spin merely reinforced Reagan's historically exceptional performance in which he famously observed: "There you go again" and "Are you better off than you were four years ago?"

Spin became more important in the 1984 Reagan/Mondale debates. Reagan's befuddled performance in the first debate gave an opening to the Mondale spin team, which ruthlessly developed the age issue in the two weeks between debates. The Reagan team was deeply worried. They counter-spun by putting Reagan on a whistle stop tour of Ohio on FDR's old train the Ferdinand Magellan, creating the image of a president vibrant and cheerful in front of vast throngs of cheering supporters. This was spin in the form of image, rather than words.

Honest spin reached its high point in the 1988 Bush/Dukakis debates. For the first time computers were used in the Republican "Voices for Victory" nationwide spin effort, in which Republican talking points were moved by computer to spokesmen around the country within an hour of the debate. The spokesman sent back messages letting Washington know which lines were working best.

After the second of those debates, honest spin became decisive. Dukakis had responded too blandly to Bernie Shaw's question: "If Kitty Dukakis were raped and murdered, would you favor the death penalty?" The Bush spin team deepened Dukakis' self-inflicted wound. They turned a mistake into a catastrophe and probably assured Bush the election.

In the 1990s the Clinton team has quickened the pace and rhythm of spin by skillful exploitation of technology and thorough preparation. However, their addiction to the "lying eyes" theory of spin has brought discredit on the process. ◆

Tony Blankley is a syndicated columnist, a regular on The McLaughlin Group, *and former press secretary for former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.*

Mary Matalin

How should the candidates woo women voters?

WOMEN ARE PARTICULARLY skilled at discerning what is no doubt the most important requirement for executive leadership: emotional I.Q. Historians and political scientists increasingly believe this determines the difference between a good president and a great president. "Likability" is not only highly predictive in presidential contests; it is essential to a successful presidency. When we like our leaders, we have confidence in their decisions and, by extension, ourselves. Gore once said in a *New York Times* interview that he has to practice being "authentic." He then went out and got new clothes,

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started calling people by their first names and walking around in the audience like Oprah. I can't imagine George W. Bush practicing to be authentic. Maybe that's one reason why he's never had trouble getting women to vote for him. When he ran for governor, he got 49 percent of the women's vote against a woman, Ann Richards, and 60 percent when he ran for reelection. He must be doing something right—these Texas women are sharp.

To be able to communicate, persuade, compromise, forge consensus, and prioritize are functions of emotional intelligence and necessary for successful democratic leadership, and the debates are an excellent forum to evaluate their emotional IQ. Look for the ability to frame an argument that reflects genuine understanding of a problem and its solution instead of polling-generated problems and gratuitous government gimmes.

Both candidates are poignantly aware of the voting power of women. Gore will be pushing the (insulting) perspective that women *need* government: government as provider. Bush couldn't be more different. Participating in the economy means women care about the tax issue and other "boring" things that we say only men care about. George W. Bush knows this. He will stay on the gender-neutral message that individuals, families, and communities fare better when they keep closer control over their own affairs.

In short, my advice to viewers is: Watch closely, listen carefully, and then go with your gut.

P.S. Unless you are an absolute political junkie and are entertained by the accoutrements of the debates, ignore: predebate expectations, post-debate spin, pundit drivel, and focus groups. Equally irrelevant are audience questions—they are prescreened, and the audience is prehyped. ◆

Mary Matalin is co-host of CNN's Crossfire, *former strategist for President George Bush, and author (with husband James Carville) of* All's Fair: Love, War, and Running for President (*Simon & Schuster).*

Terry Golway

What must the candidates do to court the men's vote?

IF THE DEBATES turn into a version of A&E's *Biography* series, the men in the audience—no doubt in full control of the remote—will flip to the game, any game, in any city, rather than hear some unverifiable, two-hankie story about some dead or lame relative. When men tune in to watch two members of their much-derided sex deliver sales pitches, they won't want to hear about personal triumphs over adversity or tragic family tales with meaningful endings. They don't want to hear closing statements that read as if they were written by Anna Quindlen. God! We get enough of that when we're watching sports.

That's it, of course: Just as the networks discovered that they could spoon-feed sports to women by transforming jocks into soap opera stars, our political handlers are trying to soften politics so that, presumably, women voters will develop a rooting interest in one candidate or the other. So, in both sports and politics, we're overwhelmed with narrative instead of competition. We root for the jock who overcame a handicap, or a broken home, or an addiction, or all three. And we're encouraged to vote for the presidential candidate with the best story.

Sports and politics have always been about personality, of course. Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey were compelling figures even before radio. And Abe Lincoln and Andrew Jackson offered their humble origins as proof of their authenticity.

But now, as most American men know, biography trumps competition every weekend. It's the curse of ABC's old *Wide World of Sports* program, which promises to take us "up close and personal" with our heroes. Olympic coverage these days is less about the games themselves and more a series of tug-at-the-heartstrings features about the competitors. Television executives say women love it.

Where does that leave men? Waiting for something real to happen.

So, candidates, remember this: In the search for male votes, competition always beats narrative. ◆

Terry Golway is executive editor and "Wise Guys" columnist at the New York Observer.

L. Brent Bozell III

Can we trust the moderator?

PUNDITS AND REPORTERS alike have told George W. Bush to be afraid, very afraid, of debating Al Gore. The man who roasted Ross Perot on *Larry King Live* versus the guy who called Greeks "Grecians"? But Bush shouldn't worry.

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If I were advising Bush, I would ask him to consider what we know from viewing the last few cycles of campaign coverage:

1. Unlike the conventions, candidates get some measure of control to choose who hosts the debates and to set the ground rules. Both candidates are at the same forum, and so the pressure for balance increases. By contrast, at the conventions, there is ample opportunity for journalists to load their questions from one direction. At the 1996 GOP convention, reporters asked Republicans fifty-one questions from the left, and only six from the right. Okay, you say, that's only good adversarial journalism. But now look at the 1996 Democratic convention. Same thing: forty-seven questions from the left, eleven from the right. No debate questioning will ever be this loaded.

2. Don't let the media banish character questions. After years of flogging the Republicans for their "sleaze factor," too many reporters have soaked up the Clinton spin that questions about character are utterly contrary to sound journalism. People need to see that their democracy is not bettered by candidates who think that lying and stonewalling are acceptable as long as those candidates support all the "right" positions on the issues. Unlike the Dole campaign, which was so compliant on this issue, the Bush team should demand the media raise the character issue in the debates.

3. Do your homework on the moderator. In 1992, the Bush campaign actually supported the idea of putting ABC's Carole Simpson in charge of the Richmond debate. What Bush received was snippy lines like "Who would like to begin? The education President?" (A few years later, Simpson was worrying the Contract with America "may increase what I see as a new mean-spiritedness in this country.")

The 1988 Bush campaign did a better job of handling interviewers. At least Bush responded to a CBS attack piece on Iran-Contra by asking Dan Rather if he'd like to be judged by the seven-minute blackout after he stormed off the set in Miami over being delayed by a tennis tournament. Many viewers thought that Bush crumbled the alleged "wimp factor" there in that interview.

4. When choosing the moderator, liberal or conservative reputations don't matter. A reputation for even-handedness does. Sam Donaldson leans to the left. Brit Hume is seen as a man of the right. But both journalists were models of tough questioners of both sides in the 1988 debates. Just because reporters have personal political beliefs should not give candidates discomfort if the reporters are thoroughly professional. Come to think of it, demand that Donaldson or Hume participate. Tim Russert is another possibility. ◆

L. Brent Bozell III is chairman of the Media Research Center and publisher of Notable Quotables.

Kate O'Beirne

Should George W. Bush be a Sensitive Guy?

When Vice President Gore joined a women's forum in June sponsored by the Oxygen network, billed as an opportunity for him to "get in touch with his feminine side," it was a good thing he wore a concealing blazer over his knit earth tones. By the end of an hour and a half spent pandering and patronizing the female audience, he must have been lactating. Al Gore tries to conceal the fact that he is a vicious and dishonest campaigner by relentlessly telling us that he cares.

Governor Bush has no need to masquerade in order to be an appealing alternative to Gore, and his nice-guy personality convincingly contradicts the unfortunate image of some congressional Republicans. When the new Republican House management was accused of trying to cut school lunches, the false charge stuck because so many of them look like the kind of guys who would relish starving little kids.

Rather than trying to out-compassion Gore, or banish the ghosts of Congresses past, Governor Bush should take a page from John McCain's playbook. Enthusiasm for the senator had little to do with campaign finance reform. His enraptured audiences were responding to the self-sacrifice, the straight talk, and the renewed muscular patriotism John McCain represented, as an antidote to the self-indulgent teenager who orders Al around. The crusade he pledged to wage evidenced leadership.

George W. Bush's bold plan to introduce Social Security personal accounts, and his commitment to cutting taxes, with little regard for elite opinion or the polls, score points for leadership. He'll win in November, among men and women, as a likeable, confident conservative.

When a majority of women polled by the Gore campaign said they'd rather date the vice president than Governor Bush, because Al could be counted on to "listen," they lied. We know that George W. is the better date—and candidate. ◆

Kate O'Beirne is Washington editor of National Review *and a regular on CNN's* Capital Gang.

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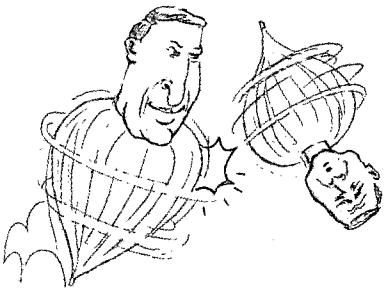
Ann Coulter



Should Al Gore be nasty or nice?

SHOULD GORE BE nasty or nice? Are you asleep yet? I have a hard time writing about Vice President Al Gore because I can't help but notice that no one wants to read about him. By the second word of this piece I'd already lost half my readers. Clinton fatigue took six years, a sex scandal, more television coverage than O.J., an impeachment, a Senate trial, a dozen felonies, three times as many lies, about forty books, and enough newspaper coverage to massacre a forest. Gore fatigue sets in after exactly five minutes.

Gore tries imitating the attack-dog President Clinton by attacking sinister "right-wing Republicans" with their eternally "risky schemes." After all, Clinton invoked the right-wing Republican boogeymen to such great effect, even staving off removal from office for clearly, incontestably, DNA-proved, impeachable offenses. But Gore prattles on about "risky right-wing schemes," and he sounds like a refugee from the nuthouse.

So Gore tries being the nice, smarmy Clinton, to appeal to the Soccer Moms. But then he ends up sounding like a bullying abusive husband talking down to his wife. Even to single women unalarmed by patronizing jerk husbands, Gore comes across like a guy in a bar giving off desperation vibes.

Consequently, the infinitely elastic Gore keeps remodeling, revamping, repositioning, hoping against hope that one last personality change will finally appeal to the American electorate. From the earth tones, to casual shirts, to the rugged Ralph Lauren cowboy boots—God knows what the man will show up in next.

But in the end, Gore is so boring no one is paying any attention anyway. He bumbles along, trying this and that, and hoping for a Hail Mary pass —when, oh when, will the liberal media drop the bomb on my opponent, George W. Bush? If the media could just succeed in discrediting Bush, perhaps the voters would rush to Gore's empty suit. That's why it is absolutely critical that he be dressed properly when they do. Earth tones will be his salvation. No, no, make that cowboy boots. Or, no, again—was it boxers or briefs? ◆

Ann Coulter is a lawyer, TV commentator, and author of High Crimes and Misdemeanors: The Case Against Bill Clinton *(Regnery).*

Amy Holmes

How should the candidates handle the abortion issue?

WE KNOW WHAT Al Gore is going to say: "Vote for me, and I'll protect a woman's right to choooose!" For Bush, the question is trickier. The abortion issue is like political intrigue in the Middle East—everyone wishes it would just go away. Therefore, I advise Bush to keep ducking. The convention is over. You have placated the pro-life wing. Now, as you face the general election, your best strategy is to let Buchanan and Gore define the extremes, and move to the center as a pro-life moderate.

In modern America, abortion is not a symptom of middle class repression, but of middle class adventurism. Let's face it, thanks to a generation of K-12 sex-ed, every teenager knows where babies come from and how to prevent their conception. No need to whisper at the drug store check-out counter for, psst, condoms. Aisle eleven, please!

On this point, Bush has the opportunity to tell the public what it wants to hear (and what our vice president cannot possibly say): Pull yourselves together, people. No more *Jerry Springer*! Sex is not a sport, nor is it a measure of personal liberation. "Free love" was a cheap come-on line elevated to political philosophy. High abortion rates, divorce, cervical cancer, fatherlessness, and unwed motherhood are all consequences of a modern sexual culture that is out of control and hurting women.

In the meantime, recent polling suggests that after eight years of Democratic stewardship, support for abortion rights is weakening. A majority of the public views the procedure as murder, and less than half of Americans support *Roe v. Wade*, down from a high of 56 percent in 1991. More than half believe that abortion should be outlawed except in cases of rape, incest, or threat to the mother's health. Notably, more women than men believe second trimester abortions should be illegal.

But in true conservative spirit, the public is wary of sweeping legislative action. A majority opposes a constitutional ban on abortion, and two-thirds of the public believes abortion is a decision best left to a woman and her doctor. Abortion is one of those issues that looks very different up close. No one wants to see women handcuffed outside Planned Parenthood clinics. (Boot camp for teens, however, has

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become very popular on daytime TV.) The public wants abortion to be safe, rare, and illegal sometimes.

Where Gore's pro-choice position is a weakness, Bush's pro-life stance is a strength—in modern America. Shift the focus from abortion to sex, and you score a homerun. ◆

Amy Holmes is a columnist for USA Today *and* Voter.com.

James K. Glassman

Play Naomi Wolf and tell the candidates what to wear.

THE IDEA HERE is that both candidates need to look serious. The earth tones suggested by Naomi Wolf for Gore may soften him, but that's the last thing he needs here. A debate is gladiatorial combat—theatrical and conventional. The best threatening gesture to make with a dark blue suit is to unbutton the middle button, but candidates should save that move for one or two big moments. Also, advice to George W.: Don't wear a watch.

The rules for any adult male engaged in a presidential debate on television are simple:

First, wear a dark blue suit, two-or three-button with squared-off—not slumpy, but also not excessively padded—shoulders. I favor a suit that shows a lot of shirtfront, with a low button. Classic Armani used to do this; so do Donna Karan and Calvin Klein (if you want domestic). The ideal is the Neapolitan designer Kiton—expensive, but Bush can afford it. As his terms have worn on, Bill Clinton has become a good dresser, and Al Gore can certainly learn from him. The guys who sell me clothes at Saks Fifth Avenue in Chevy Chase once told me that Clinton went through three or four dark blue Mani (less expensive Armani label) suits a year.

Second, wear a white shirt with a straight (not spread, not button-down, not tab like the late Ron Brown used to wear) collar and simple buttons at the sleeves (cufflinks are too prissy for candidates). Light blue is too casual and no longer necessary with today's TV cameras; French (deep) blue is fine, but picking the wrong tie can be disastrous with this color (the tendencies are to go either too dark or too light, and you look like a gangster or like Regis Philbin), and I don't trust either Gore or George W. Bush to make the right selection; so stick to white.

OK. That leaves the tie. Blue, especially the kind of light-to-medium perky blue you can find at places like Paul Stuart in New York, is best. But, despite his Harvard M.B.A., Bush can't wear blue since it screams, "Yale!" So, blue for Gore, with either small white dots or a tasteful dark (blue or red) diagonal stripe. Bush, like all of us graying guys, looks very good in purple, tending to pink—probably with a tight pattern (abstract, not whales or golf clubs) in dark blue with a little white. Stay away from red ties (cliché), yellow (terrible on television, and disappearing against a white shirt), and the insipid green favored by James Baker of George W.'s dad's administration.

If I were structuring a presidential debate, I would set it up like a debate I saw in Germany in 1983, when Helmut Kohl was first running: three candidates sitting around a table with a single journalist. There were no rules, and the journalist generally stayed out unless the conversation lapsed. The debate went on for three hours, even though there was no set time limit. Everyone was exhausted. In a case like this, I'd urge both Bush and Gore to wear gray slacks, no jackets, and blue or off-white shirts with the sleeves rolled up—menacingly. Now that would be a debate! ◆

James K. Glassman, former host of three television programs, is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and host of the web site TechCentralStation.com.

Christopher Buckley

How could the debates be made more interesting?

MODERN PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES are, apparently, designed to be as boring and uneventful as possible, so as to ensure that only dedicated democracy dweebs and geeks are tuned in. Small wonder that, according to Nielsen, twenty-three million people watch *Who Wants to be a Millionaire.* And less than three watch the debates. At least it's done this way on purpose.

The way to have an exciting debate isn't to leave the questioning up to appointed media panjandrums (assuming that's the plural of panjandrum) but to let the candidates grill each other.

To that end, here are a few questions it would be fun to hear Bush ask Gore. (If by the end of this I haven't reached my 300-word limit, I'll present some questions that Gore could ask Bush.)

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Mr. Vice President, until the fact became public and caused you some considerable embarrassment, you had on your campaign payroll at $15,000 a month—more than you yourself make, sir—a controversial author whose job it was to advise you on how to present yourself to the public. My question is in two parts, first, why did you find it necessary to ask a feminist how to be a man? Second, am I missing something here?

Mr. Vice President, you gave a speech at a Democratic convention in which you described, in genuinely heartbreaking detail, the death of your beloved sister Nancy from lung cancer. You presented this as an object lesson in why it is imperative that the government try to stop people from smoking. It then transpired that for a year after your sister's death, you continued to accept money from the tobacco lobby. When you were confronted with this seeming paradox, you explained that your sister's death had left you "psychologically numbed," and therefore not accountable for, your actions. My question is in two parts, first, are there any other psychologically numbing events in your past that we should know about before electing you president? Second, what the ——, sir?

Now: some questions that Gore should ask Bush. Hell, out of space. If you don't mind my saying, that's just like a women's magazine to be so strict. Why, if this were *TMQ*, I'm certain they would give me more space. They'd just bump a hair-weave ad. ◆

Christopher Buckley is author, most recently, of Little Green Men *(Random House), a comic novel featuring a Washington pundit and government secrets.*

KARLYN BOWMAN'S

Poll-Pourri

Debates: Pronto Polling

KATHLEEN FRANKOVIC, DIRECTOR of polling for CBS News and one of the profession's best historians, reports that it took Gallup two weeks to tell Americans who won the Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960. Polling was done in person, and tabulating the results was a time-consuming proposition. (Kennedy "won," by the way, 43 to 23 percent.) Barely fifteen years later, with telephone interviewing common and computers readily available, the *Associated Press* reported the results of its poll on one of the 1976 debates the day after it took place. In 1992, with much faster computers, CBS News was able to report results within fifteen minutes of the conclusion of the second presidential debates.

Kennebunkport or Carthage?

IN A NATIONAL POLL in May, Opinion Dynamics and Fox News asked people whether they would rather spend their summer vacation with Al Gore or George W. Bush. The national sample opted for Bush, by 38 to 27 percent. A third of women said Bush and 28 percent Gore. Among men, the responses were lopsidedly in favor of Bush: Forty-three percent said they would prefer to spend their vacations with Bush, compared to only 26 percent with Gore.

No Wimps in Foxholes

IN NEARLY ALL the polls this year, Americans have said that George W. Bush has stronger leadership qualities than Al Gore. Gore consistently leads on having the experience necessary to do the job. Gallup suggests that Bush's lead in the spring and summer national polls derives largely from the perception of his strength. Perhaps that's why 46 percent told Gallup that they would rather have Bush in a foxhole with them during combat; 39 percent wanted Gore at their side.

Mr. Personality

EARLIER THIS YEAR, 48 percent of the respondents told Gallup that it would be more fun to have dinner with Bush than Gore (43 percent). Other questions like this suggest that W. has the more appealing personality. In a Harris poll, more people said they would rather go to a baseball game with Bush (34 percent) than Gore (24 percent). In an Opinion Dynamics/Fox News poll, 38 percent said they would rather spend their summer vacation with Bush compared to only 27 percent for Gore. Gore "wins" on a few of these frivolous matchups, though. Gallup found that more people would trust Gore more to babysit for their children than Bush (44 to 37 percent). Harris found that more people would trust Gore to invest their money (33 to Bush's 16 percent). ◆

Karlyn Bowman is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

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The Seriously Silly Sirens of *West Wing*

The women of *The West Wing* must have sustained brain damage crashing through the glass ceiling. But ***Ivy McClure Stewart*** likes them anyway

It's been called America's civics lesson. Skillfully written, critically acclaimed, and watched by millions of Americans each week, NBC's The West Wing *transports its audience to a "fictional" White House. It is, of course, a thinly veiled, loving tribute to the Clinton White House—but who cares?*

Sure, it's replete with the predictable Hollywood depictions of congressional Republicans as lower life forms, conservatives with the intelligence of turnips, and liberals always on the moral high ground. But, if you don't mind the obvious agenda and empty heroics, you will discover that what makes The West Wing *particularly irresistible are the women.*

No surprises here, the writers would have you believe that the women of The West Wing *are powerful, sharp, and idealistic. And, we at* The Women's Quarterly *are delighted that Hollywood has taken a "bold" step in depicting hard-working women crashing through the glass ceiling of politics. However, heaven help us regular folks if they have any actual basis in reality.*

So, if you haven't as yet slept in the Lincoln bedroom of this *White House, herewith is a loyal viewer's guide:*

Press Secretary C. J. Cregg

Never mind those defenseless Pakistanis, you have a career and love life to worry about.

Loosely based on former Clinton press secretary, Dee Dee Myers, C.J. rushes through *The West Wing*'s endless maze of dimly lit corridors, barking out abrupt one-liners. After fielding questions on the State Dinner at her morning press briefing, C.J. snarls that she's glad she went to school for twenty-two years to answer questions about the first lady's shoes. In true *West Wing* fashion, C.J. frequently manages to humiliate herself with the ever-present "just because I am a woman doesn't mean I can't do it" chip on her shoulder.

In one episode, India has just invaded Pakistan. The Joint Chiefs warn that press reports of the invasion will endanger innocent lives and because C.J. (played by Amazon actress Allison Janney) is cavorting with a member of the press corps, they don't trust her to keep it a secret. In the world of *The West Wing*, this is the *real* crisis: Will

Drawing by Sandy McClelland and M. Pepall

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C.J.'s lack of knowledge make her look stupid? Will her reporter boyfriend think that she has little access to the president and his top advisors? "Oh great, India invades Pakistan—let's not tell C.J.!" she whines.

The National Organization for Women has hailed C.J. as one of the best examples of a powerful female character on prime time TV. No wonder, she's a six-foot, middle-aged broad who leads her boyfriend around by the nose—and he loves it.

Media Consultant Mandy Hampton

WE COULD HAVE sworn that Mandy Hampton is a Slim-Fast version of fierce Clintonian mastermind Mandy Grunwald.

But the obnoxious Mandy—who won't be back in the fall—is supposed to be James Carville in drag. According to *The West Wing*'s official homepage, "She is a consultant who isn't on the official White House payroll. She's paid by the Democratic National Committee to help shape President Bartlet's message and to formulate policy strategy on his behalf." But Mandy Hampton is no James Carville. Played by Moira Kelley, Mandy spent an entire episode badgering anyone who would listen about her obsessive campaign to obtain a new panda for the National Zoo. Why bother with the appropriations bill or human rights in the People's Republic when America's children are mourning the passing of Hsing-Hsing, the panda?

Mandy manages to embarrass herself episode after episode—but she's certainly no trigger-happy Janet Reno. In one histrionic scene, Mandy is aghast that the FBI would even consider a raid on a house in the back woods of Idaho where a group of armed survivalists have taken an undercover agent hostage. Mandy feels certain that they can talk it out and get to "yes." Given her extensive experience in law enforcement—none—the president chooses to disregard the FBI. When she is told the negotiations have failed and that the agent has been shot in the head, Mandy, always a lady, announces before a room full of diplomats at a State Dinner, "I'm gonna barf."

Hearing-impaired Pollster Joey Lucas

AT LEAST THEY spare us buxom interns flashing their thong underwear.

Played by Marlee Matlin, Joey Lucas is a deaf pollster—get it? "I hear everything," she says. The consummate professional, Joey has been known, while in the presence of the president, to sprawl casually on the Oval Office sofa and blow spit bubbles at her boss.

Nevertheless, deputy chief of staff Josh Lyman has a crush on her. One universal truth about the women on *The West Wing*—no matter what they do, the men are always panting after them.

First Lady Abigail Bartlet

SHE HAS A husband who thinks she's sexy, a respectable job of her own, and actually looks good *in pantsuits.*

Played by Stockard Channing, Abigail Bartlet, M.D., rarely shows up at the White House unless her husband —a secret sufferer of multiple sclerosis—needs an injection.

But who'd believe a first lady without an agenda? In one episode, Abigail announces on a morning news show that international child labor issues are her number one legislative priority. Deputy communications director Sam Seaborn (Rob Lowe), fearing that the first lady is eclipsing the president, asks her press secretary to stop hogging America's airwaves. In yet another example of *West Wing* protocol, the first lady's aide elegantly replies, "Your guy has a 48 percent approval rating and our guy is at 61. Bite me."

Administrative Assistant Donna Moss

WHAT'S A BEAUTIFUL, blonde conservative doing in this White House?

In a year of budget surpluses, plucky secretary Donna Moss wants to know when she is going to get her money back. "It doesn't work that way," her boss Josh Lyman tells her, "We're Democrats."

No surprise, she's stuck filing.

Laurie the Prostitute

AND FINALLY, WHAT would a Washington TV series be without a prostitute with a penchant for puffing wacky-tobaccy?

"It's not like I'm a drug person. I just love pot," Laurie declares to Sam Seaborn, casually lighting up a joint as he stumbles into her shower the morning after their first encounter.

Like all women on *The West Wing*, Laurie (a.k.a. Brittany while on the job) is a careerist, attending law school by day. "There are ways to pay your way through law school without student loans," she says sensibly. But, Laurie, some ways are *legal*.

Still, there are some things she won't do. When Seaborn asks her for dirt on the Republicans she's servicing, Laurie indignantly throws him out. How could Sam think she would stoop so low? ◆

Ivy McClure Stewart is managing editor of The Women's Quarterly.

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Interview

Missing Daddy

What happens when a girl grows up without her father? Author *Jonetta Rose Barras* knows from personal experience

"Most mornings, before heading to work, I unconsciously mixed a Molotov cocktail of anguish and determination," poet and Washington Times *columnist Jonetta Rose Barras writes in her new book,* Whatever Happened to Daddy's Little Girl? *(Ballantine). "I carried it with me, tossing it at the slightest provocation. Sometimes I was caught in the explosion, confused. Who was the real culprit—a man I wanted to call Daddy, my mother, or me?"*

By the time she was eight years old, the New Orleans-born Barras had lost three fathers—her biological father, the man she believed to be her father, and the much-loved Noel, who lived with Barras' mother and who simply left one day. Barras began searching for the answer to her riddle in 1988 when she received a shocking phone call from her mother.

She talked to TWQ *editor Charlotte Hays in a bar not far from Barras' old office at Washington's* City Paper*:*

TWQ: *We have heard more about the effects of growing up without a father on boys than on girls. Why have girls been left out of this?*

BARRAS: There is a general philosophy that boys are best reared by their fathers and girls by their mothers. It is sort of a gender segregation that has gone on for a long time, and was exacerbated by the feminist movement, in spite of studies and psychological information to the contrary.

TWQ: *How did you become interested in the subject?*

BARRAS: My mother called me from New Orleans one day in 1988 to ask, "Do you want to see your father?" I had thought my father was Bill Barras, who had not shown any interest in me when I was a little girl. He and my mother were separated by the time I was four years old, and when he came to visit, he was enamored of my older brother and older sister. I was treated with a distant coldness. "Why would I want to see Bill?" I asked. She said, "No, I don't mean him. I mean your *real* father." That floored me. I had worn Bill's name for thirty-six years.

Of course, there had been a story circulating in my family about my birth at Charity Hospital in New Orleans. The nurses supposedly told my mother that she shouldn't take me home because I didn't look like my sister and brother. I had dark skin and my hair and nose were different. My brother and sister were light-skinned Creole-like Negroes, as we were called then. This story had shadowed me throughout my life. But I discovered that, in fact, it was a true story. I met my father the summer of 1988, and I learned that he and my mother had basically had an affair. When I was an infant, he had taken care of me on occasion, and he had wanted to keep me, which frightened my mother and led her to ban him.

TWQ: *What was the meeting like?*

BARRAS: I met him in New Orleans at his apartment. He was suffering from emphysema. I suspect that was part of the impetus to meet me. We had a wonderful meeting. He and I had a very good talk, and when my conversation with him was finished, I

 Photograph by Paul Figura

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went home and went off on my mother. It was the first time I had ever cursed around my mother. I know a lot of people think that is kind of strange, but it's true. Let me just go back a little bit. When I left him that day, I told him I was in financial trouble. I had just been fired from a job. He was not a rich man, but he said, "I will send you something." He never sent it. I felt a second rejection. It was even more traumatic then, because I had felt rejected like this with Bill.

The experience made me start thinking about my life. Had I spent my life trying to assuage this feeling of rejection? And the answer was yes. I had been looking from the time I was in my teens until then for someone to love me and not leave me. I was thinking about these things, and then my father died. I started talking about this casually to people. Then I saw a fatherhood movement developing, so I paid attention to it because, unconsciously, I was looking for myself in that movement. I was fascinated by this notion of how important fathers are because I never had one.

TWQ: *How important was the Million Man March?*

BARRAS: The Million Man March was the catalyst for me. I endorsed what they were doing and wrote an essay about it. But I also realized that the issue was important for women. If men were having trouble with questions of masculinity, weren't women having trouble with the same questions but in a different way? Weren't women who were reared by other women equally challenged? It thrust my thinking one step further: If fathers are important to boys, are they not important to daughters for the same reasons? Women need a male model the same way boys need a female model. Two years after the Million Man March, I wrote a piece about my own history for the [Washington] *City Paper*, and the book evolved from that article.

"A father teaches his daughter to set limits."

TWQ: *What's the role of a good father?*

BARRAS: If the first man in your life loves you, despite the fact you have freckles, you are more likely to be able to negotiate the world. Your father serves as a model, a benchmark from which you evaluate every other man and every other relationship in your life, either consciously or unconsciously. A father teaches his daughter to set limits. Clinical psychologists and child experts say a father helps to "individuate" a daughter. Most females have what is called an external locus. You and I are friends. I walk into your house and say, "How does this dress look?" If you say it looks bad, I don't care what I thought back home, I am going to feel uneasy all night. With boys, it's different—they have an internal locus, so they don't necessarily need someone to tell them they look good to feel that they do. This is the kind of machismo and cockiness and over confidence that sometimes turns off women.

A girl's father introduces her to the world in a way that her mother doesn't. Our mothers are very cautious. Fathers encourage exploration of the world. And, despite the women's movement, it is still a rather masculine world. You'd better be able to understand the nuances—the subtle nuances—of that world. What does this mean? What does that mean? Three years ago I picked up the phone and called my mother and said, "How do you know if a man loves you?" Now, I'm forty-something, and I'm asking this question because I am not sure about the subtleties and the nuances of male communication in romance. If I had a father, I would be a lot surer.

TWQ: *I am interested that you are a harsh critic of the way men appear in novels by feminist writers.*

BARRAS: Some feminists have made men the devil, the same way Elijah Mohammed made white people the devil. Consequently, that kind of demonizing of men has become acceptable. So you've got African-American women like Terry McMillan and Alice Walker writing novels about women's liberation at the expense of the demonizing of men and destruction of men. I had problems with Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, which is now considered one of the classics in African-American literature. I don't think it was a very well-written book. But also, in order for Celie to be freed, Celie and Shug have to destroy Mister. Further, Celie and Shug have to destroy heterosexuality.

They not only destroy the man, but then they destroy the whole concept of male/female interaction and move toward a gay lifestyle or a quasi-gay lifestyle in the book. They have become homosexuals in order to liberate a woman? And then you have Terry McMillan's *Waiting to Exhale*, a book about four African-American women and their terrible relationships with men, which led one to set fire to her estranged husband's convertible, and which became a rallying call for black women to burn BMWs. You find not one man in either of those books with any redeeming qualities. My God, there are men in America, in black America, who have wonderful quali-

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ties. Couldn't these writers have at least one good male character in a book?

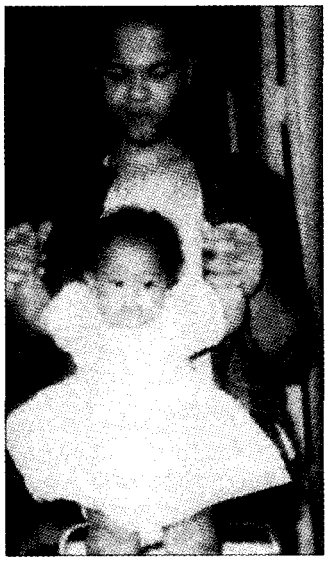
TWQ: *Still, it does seem that boys might be more affected by growing up without a father.*

BARRAS: Joyce Ladner is a sociologist who says that teen pregnancy is to girls what jail is to boys. If you look at those two as comparable, then you see that there is a comparable level of turmoil. Until recently, we saw increases in teen pregnancy. We are just beginning to see the numbers come down. But, now more and more girls are joining gangs or creating their own gangs or being involved in violent activity. Now you are seeing the immersion of women—fatherless women—into this lifestyle of violence.

This is where my "fatherless women syndrome" comes into play—these fatherless women are angry. They join the gangs and become attached to violent guys because they want protection. Increasingly girls are forming their own gangs and even attacking other women. Not only can girls be as violent as boys, they can be more violent. I quote [law enforcement expert] Lowell Duckett who says a girl in a gang, with a weapon, is, either out of sheer anger or fear, going to unload that weapon if you get into an encounter with her. A guy generally will just use enough force to get you out of his way. But a girl is more likely to continue to unload a gun even after the other person is dead.

TWQ: *You say that some women end up "marrying the government," and that the government is a "jealous lover."*

BARRAS: When you look at the real impact of the early rules and regulations surrounding welfare, women were penalized when they had a man in the home, even if he was the biological father of their children. If there was a man in the home, that woman was taken off welfare. The government encouraged women to disconnect from men. So the government was saying, "I want you, and no one else can have you." Despite the controversy it generated, Daniel Patrick Moynihan's report on black families—which argued thirty-four years ago that the "fundamental weakness" of the black community was fatherlessness—was a visionary document. It identified certain factors that were negatively affecting the development and stability of black families.



Once you begin to erode a family, you are then eroding a community and then you are eroding society. I think that is what we are looking at right now: the unarrested erosion of all of American society. It now extends into the larger community. We need to arrest it now, and I think the fatherhood movement and the marriage movement—that unfortunately to a certain extent are being advocated mostly by conservatives—are really good things. It's too bad that some people won't pay attention because conservatives are doing it. I wish these efforts were more bipartisan.

TWQ: *What are some of the things that you think could save the family?*

BARRAS: The changes that were made in the welfare laws were good. I am also happy that the women's movement is beginning to invite men back into their world. We now need a concentrated effort to reestablish two-parent households. Where the government can help advance that goal, in terms of funding and policy changes, I think that should happen. What I am hoping is that we will begin to have more vocal leaders in our communities—black, white, Hispanic communities—saying *everything* is wrong with a woman rearing a child alone.

I was on the radio not long ago and a woman said to me, "Well, I raised my daughter and I lost my father when I was young, and my daughter lost her father when she was young, but we are okay." She mentioned that she was fifty-two and that she had a twenty-one-year-old granddaughter. That means that her daughter had a baby in her teens. So there is a problem. And I had to say that to her: "Hello, you are fifty-two and you have a twenty-one-year-old granddaughter. Don't you see that there is a problem?"

We've got intergenerational fatherlessness. We've got to make people recognize that, in fact, there *is* a problem. But they don't want to recognize it, so I'm hoping my book will help.

All this adapting we have done, all these new definitions of blended families and nontraditional families, that's [expletive deleted]. Blended and nontraditional families are the direct result of the issue that I'm talking about, which is fatherlessness. We have all developed a coping lingo and coping skills to mask the scar and pain of fatherlessness. It is time to take off the mask. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, that substitutes for the presence of a good father in the home. ◆

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Mother Nature Strikes Back!

John Colapinto, _Christina Hoff Sommers_, and _Andrew Sullivan_ take on the long-held notion that sexual identity is a social construct. Tales of testosterone, sex-change, and quilting bees for boys…

When Andrew Sullivan took testosterone injections for a health problem, he discovered something weird: "Mere hours after a T shot," the British-born New York Times Magazine *columnist wrote in an article headlined "The He Hormone," "my dog ran off the leash to forage for a chicken bone left in my local park. The more I chased her, the more she ran. By the time I retrieved her, the bone had been consumed, and I gave her a sharp tap on her rear end. 'Don't smack your dog!' yelled a burly guy a few yards away. What I found myself yelling back at him is not printable in this magazine, but I have never used that language in public before, let alone bellow it at the top of my voice. He shouted*

Drawings by Sandy McClelland

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back, and within seconds I was actually close to hitting him. He backed down and slunk off. I strutted home, chest puffed up, contrite beagle dragged sheepishly behind me. It wasn't until half an hour later that I realized that I had been a complete jerk and had nearly gotten into the first public brawl of my life."

Journalist John Colapinto also offers evidence that human sexual identity is not a social construct. Indeed, Tom Wolfe has said that Colapinto's shocking book, As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl *(HarperCollins), "stands as exhibit A" against the idea that nurture is more important than nature. It is the heartbreaking story of a baby boy whom an ambitious doctor changed into a girl.*

While Colapinto's book is about a truly bizarre experiment in human sexuality, philosopher and W. H. Brady Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Christina Hoff Sommers shows in her compelling new book, The War Against Boys *(Simon & Schuster), how society at large now tries to make boys act more like girls.*

The Independent Women's Forum invited all three to share their insights at a symposium in Washington, D.C.

JOHN COLAPINTO
Bruce, Brenda, and David

My book, *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl,* is the story of an extraordinary and unrepeatable experiment in human sexual and gender identity. It is about a boy who was born developmentally normal in the mid-1960s and who, when he was eight months old, underwent circumcision because of a minor problem with his foreskin. During the circumcision, the doctor used the wrong instrument, an electrocautery needle instead of a scalpel, and the penis was badly burned and eventually sloughed off. Left with a baby who had a pair of normal testicles but no penis, the parents searched everywhere for help in their community of Winnipeg, Canada.

Eventually they saw Dr. John Money, a world famous sexologist from Johns Hopkins University, on television. Money was talking about his new clinic for sex changes. He had a theory that we are born psychosexually neutral, that we are, in fact, blank slates. Money believed that our gender identity is written upon us by society, by parental influences, and societal pressures. That viewpoint was popular in the 1960s, largely because of Money's writings from the 1950s.

Like everyone who has ever heard John Money speak, the young parents were enthralled. He was charismatic. He was smooth, and he never stumbled over a word. They wrote him and asked if he could help. When Money read about this penis-less boy, he replied, "Indeed I can help. Get down here to Baltimore immediately and let's get to work." So they went to Baltimore, and Money assured them that sex easily could be reassigned up until three years of age.

Money had worked with hermaphroditic children, children born with anatomical anomalies of the sex organs. He had never tested his theory with a developmentally normal child. So, this was a big moment for him. And there was another amazing wrinkle: The baby in question was born an identical twin. The other twin, who had not been injured, was being raised as a boy, Brian. That meant that Money had a perfectly matched control for an experiment to show that it is nurture, as opposed to nature, that defines us sexually. At the age of twenty-two months, the boy's two testicles were surgically removed, and a rudimentary vagina, which was to be completed later, was fashioned; Bruce Reimer became Brenda Reimer.

When the twins were about six years old, Money, who was already quite famous for his theories about gender identity, said, "It's going marvelously." He continued to say that through the 1970s, and then, interestingly enough, when the child was around the age of puberty, Money mysteriously stopped writing about the twins case. One scientist, however, Dr. Milton Diamond, remained interested in it. Diamond suspected puberty would be the moment when we would know for sure, but Money seemed disinclined to speak about how it was going. He put Diamond off.

Through his own investigative methods, Diamond, in the early 1990s, found the twin who had been raised as Brenda, now an adult, living in Winnipeg. He did not find Brenda living with a white picket fence and a husband and children by adoption—the picture Money had painted. Instead, he found a man, thirty-two at the time, married with three children by adoption. He was employed as a slaughterhouse sanitation worker, a really rather ghastly environment where no women worked. Diamond wrote a scientific paper that explained that this world famous, and supposedly successful, sex change had, in fact, been an abject flop.

As it turned out, Brenda had been miserable from day one. The first minute she was put in a dress, she pulled it off. She seemed to have had an instinctual aversion to frilly clothing. Nor did she want to play with dolls. She wanted to play with her brother's trucks and cars. She was ridiculed in the schoolyard. She had a kind of pressing, aggressive need to dominate.

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When I spoke with Brenda's kindergarten and elementary school teachers, I asked what was it about Brenda that was so different? And really all they could say was, "Well, we just knew Brenda was somehow not a girl." Well, how did you know? "Well, she was more aggressive." Or, "She wanted to dominate."

We don't possess good language for speaking about sex-behavior differences. But there were indefinable things that people were picking up about Brenda, and that Brenda was picking up about herself.

She had been put on a course of female hormones and had grown breasts. She was finally told the truth at the urging of a compassionate psychiatrist, who said to her parents, "You must tell her or she will kill herself."

Brenda then, at the age of fifteen, embarked on the remarkable journey of undergoing a sex change from girl to boy, which required a double mastectomy, a course of testosterone, and obviously a name change. He rechristened himself David, after David and Goliath. He felt he had done something similar to the biblical hero in slaying the Goliath of the medical establishment and society: the teachers, parents, psychiatrists and psychologists, the endocrinologists and surgeons, and everyone else who had been trying to press him into girlhood.

His decision and his ability to make that sexual change spoke to me more clearly and dramatically and movingly about his emphatic need to live in the gender that he felt himself to be more than any other aspect of this story. What was outrageous about the whole story was how readily Money's theories have been accepted, first of all, by the medical establishment, and then by the social sciences and the media.

To hear David speak about sexuality is to feel that you're in the presence of an oracle. His words have a kind of horse sense. What I found so compelling about David's story is how incredibly stupid smart people can be. ◆

CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS
Boy Bashing

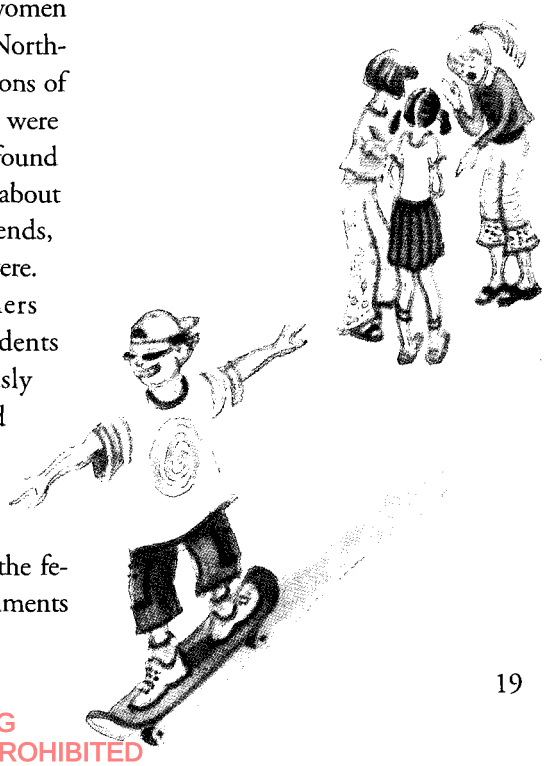
When Oprah Winfrey's *O* magazine came out, David Letterman leafed through it on the air, trying to decide whether he was included in its targeted audience. In the magazine, readers were advised to "keep a courage journal, write down every brave or surprising thing you've ever done," and to "peel back layers and excavate the real you." There were tips on candlelight bubble baths and five romantic things to do with strawberries. Finally, Letterman looked up, bewildered and confused, and said: "What's the deal here? Not a single picture of a race car."

This illustrates a point often made by the iconoclastic feminist Camille Paglia: that men are happy in what Paglia calls "People Free Zones." Paglia speaks of the object-loving male mind. Males, young and old, are less interested in talking about their feelings and personal relationships than are women and girls. In an experiment at Northeastern University, the conversations of college students in the cafeteria were secretly recorded. Women were found to be vastly more likely to talk about intimates, close friends, boyfriends, and family members than boys were.

In another study, researchers presented male and female students with two images simultaneously through a stereoscope and asked them to say what they saw. The male subjects saw objects far more often than they saw people; the reverse was true for the female students. Dozens of experiments confirm that women are much better than men at judging emotions in a stranger's face. Men are slightly better at spatial reasoning. Females are better at verbal skills. Well, why should this be the case?

A growing body of evidence confirms the experience of parents and the wisdom of the ages that there are basic differences between the sexes, particularly in preferences and behavior, which are innate, hard-wired, and not the result of social conditioning. In the past few years, there have been some exciting developments in neuroscience, genetics, endocrinology, and even evolutionary psychology, pinpointing the biological correlates of some typical gender differences.

A recent issue of *Scientific American* reviewed this literature. An article by Doreen Kimura, a psychologist from Vancouver's Simon Fraser University, looked at children's play preferences. And, of course, she documented, again and again, that males are more aggressive, while females are more nurturing. She answers the question, "Why does this come about?" by saying that the level of exposure to various sex hormones in early life appears



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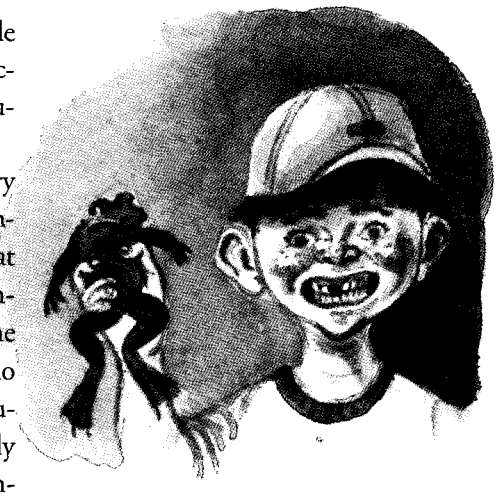
to be the most important factor differentiating males and females.

There are a group of girls that have been studied for several years at UCLA by Melissa Hines. These are girls with a congenital disorder—congenital adrenal hyperplasia, or CAH, a genetic defect that comes about when a female fetus is subjected to abnormally large quantities of male hormones. The CAH girls tend to grow up to be more aggressive than their non-CAH sisters. Hines did various experiments with toys. She put the standard array of toys, the glittering things the girls play with, the dolls, the nurturing animals, and on the other side the trucks, the Legos. The CAH girls go right for the trucks. They are also better than other girls at spatial reasoning.

This kind of information is rarely discussed or taken seriously in schools of education, women's studies classes, and women's advocacy groups. If you talk to gender experts at universities, they will tell you with complete confidence that gender is social construction, an artifact of culture. Sandra Lee Bartkey, a colleague in my field of philosophy, says that we're all born bisexual and then transformed into male and female-gender human beings. According to Bartkey, we are psychosexually neutral.

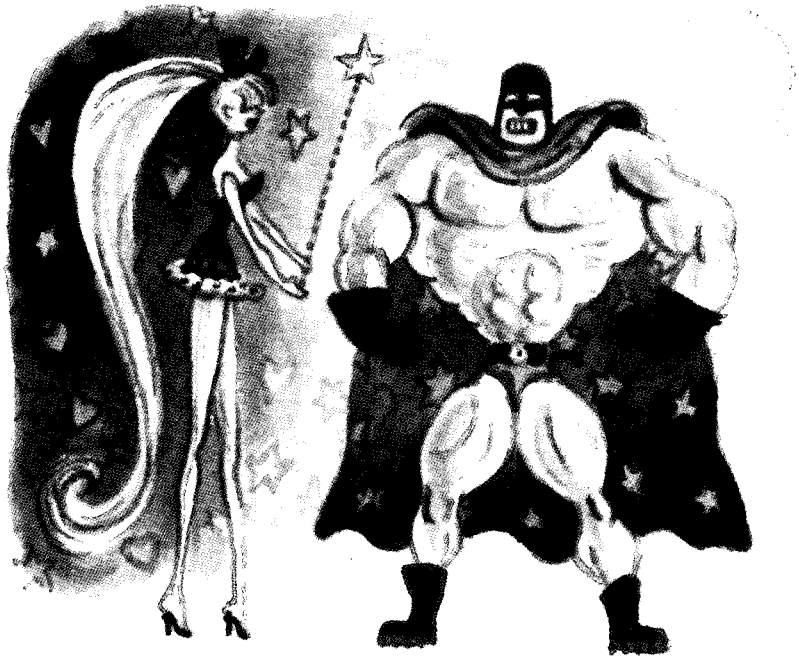
It's a central tenet of feminist theory that male-female differences are invented by culture. They seem to think that in a just universe, without the dominance of patriarchy, we'd be like the *Saturday Night Live* character, Pat, who was neither male nor female and actually quite a likeable creature but hardly somebody to inspire Utopian yearnings. Even the so-called "difference feminists," Deborah Tannen and Carol Gilligan, don't believe that sexual differences are biological. They believe that men and women are different, but they say that it's cultural in origin. One of the things that I try to show in *The War Against Boys* is how successful some hardline feminists have been in obscuring the research that contradicts this social constructionist dogma.

The problem with this dogma is that it gives enormous latitude to educators who want to tamper with children's gender identities. After all, what is badly constructed by the patriarchal culture can be reconstructed in the



right way. Gloria Steinem, for example, is fond of saying that we must raise boys more like we raise girls. She and some of her colleagues are convinced that the male culture is dangerous, that masculinity itself is toxic and that young men must be trained away from it.

This dogma has inspired activist-educators to take on the challenge of resocializing little boys to be more like girls. Notably active on this front are the Wellesley Center for Research on Women, the Harvard School of Education, and the United States Department of Education. At a Wellesley conference on "Gender Equity for Girls and Boys," teachers—who were there to receive certification credits—were told that there is an "opportunity zone" (when a child is forming a gender schema) when a child's sexual identity is entirely malleable. Not one of the 200 teachers attending the conference questioned the assumption that masculinity and femininity are learned characteristics!



Although Wellesley is a fairly mainstream institution, this may be rather an extreme case. But, in more and more schools, "boyness" is now treated as a pathology, a disorder, something from which a child must recover. This begins in elementary schools,

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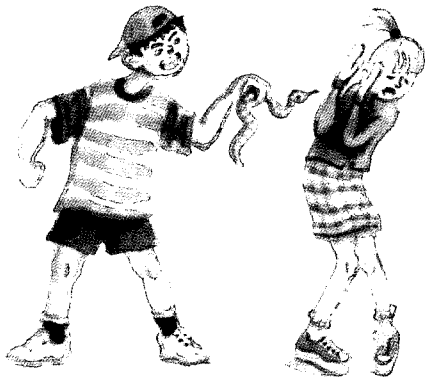
which are increasingly female-friendly domains—boys are there on sufferance. Today many educators regard the normal rough-and-tumble play of little boys with disapproval. Just to give one example, a Southern California mother of boys was stunned when she was informed that her son was punished for running during recess.

A few weeks ago in New Jersey, three little kindergartners were suspended for three days for using their fingers as guns in a game of cops and robbers. Mothers, too, are growing intolerant of the antics of little boys. This may explain the rapid rise of the number of boys diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. A school administrator from Bloomfield, Michigan, named Deb Lang, called me one day and told me how out of favor boys are, and she said she gets calls from mothers who are worried because they have an "immature four-year-old son!" She tries to explain to them that there is no such thing as a mature four-year-old.

Young children ages five to eleven, prefer same-sex groups. Now this, of course, reinforces gender stereotypes. In many schools this is no longer tolerated. "Gender equity experts" encourage integration, as they put it. To give you a couple of examples, a little boy, Alex, a second grader in East Windsor, New Jersey, was not allowed to pass out invitations to his birthday party because he had invited only boys. His teacher and principal deemed this sexist and discriminatory.

There was a story in the *New York Times* that quoted Elizabeth Krents, the admissions director of the Dalton School, one of New York City's premiere schools. She was boasting of Dalton's determination to get rid of conventional girl-boy behavior. She said, "We don't say, okay boys in the dress-up corner, girls in the block area. We build it into everything we do." She noted that second graders were studying *Grimms Fairy Tales*, analyzing the tales for gender stereotypes. This conjures up images of children in China during the Cultural Revolution, analyzing children's stories for themes of capitalist imperialism.

But boys are not cooperating in these efforts. One of the more amusing cases concerns a very feminist teacher in a San Francisco school who tried to get the boys interested in quilting and celebrating women. She had the sixth- and seventh-grade boys make a quilt. Each child stitched a muslin square to celebrate a "woman we admire." A little boy, Jimmy, decided that he admired Monica Seles. Because she was the tennis player who got stabbed, he stitched a bloody dagger on his square. This must be an original in the history of quilting. He thought it was cool. And his teacher thought he was a psychopath.



I think what Jimmy was doing—in the oppressive confines of a feminist quilting environment—was asserting his boyness which, as I show in my book, was under direct attack by this teacher.

The corrective is good science, clear thinking, and willingness to accept the philosophy that Mother Nature may not be politically correct. American boys, whose very masculinity is deemed a disorder, need our support. If you are an optimist, as I am, you believe that eventually good sense and fairness will prevail. If you are the mother of boys, as I am, you know that one of the more agreeable facts is that boys, try as you will, simply will be boys. ◆

ANDREW SULLIVAN
Testosterone Power

I BELIEVE PASSIONATELY that greater opportunity for women is probably the most significant gain for human freedom in the last century. But with this advance came a problem: a denial of biological or psychological differences between the sexes. I speak as a homosexual who, as a boy in an all-boys school in England, growing up amid the rough-and-tumble of boys' play, was both comfortable in my maleness, but also aware that I was different.

I began to understand that I might be gay at about the age of nine. It was never, to my mind, a question of whether I was male or female. I knew that I was male. A gay man is a man before he is gay, and a gay woman is a woman before she is a lesbian. To say this in the gay community, however, is taboo—like much of academia, the gay world is wedded to the notion of social construction.

But anybody who has spent any time in the gay community will be struck by how different the cultures of lesbians and gay men are. All the stereotypes about men show up in gay male society; all the stereotypes about women show up in lesbian society. There is a famous joke: What does a lesbian bring on her second date? A U-Haul. What does a gay man bring on a second date? What second date?

When you read the science about gender differences, you realize there are very few hard cases, with control

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groups and without cultural bias. But because of a medical condition, I had the almost unique and undeniable experience of having what is literally an injection of manhood in a syringe.

I am HIV positive, and two years ago, when I found myself with no sex drive, little energy, becoming more passive, sleeping half the day, and being depressed, my testosterone was checked—it was found to be below that of an eighty-year-old man. The usual treatment is injections of testosterone.

Testosterone injections dramatically altered the way I felt, the way I behaved, the way I acted, even the way I conceived of myself, which was an eye opener. Because I inject the testosterone into my rump every two weeks, and it leaves the bloodstream quickly, I can actually feel its power on almost a daily basis.

The rush of a T shot is not unlike the rush of going on a first date or speaking before an audience. I feel braced. After one injection, I almost got in a public brawl for the first time in my life. There is always a lust peak —every time it takes me unaware. But afterwards, I realize again that lust is a chemical. It comes, it goes, it waxes and wanes. You are not helpless before it, but you aren't in total control either.

There were also long-term physical changes: Going from napping during the day, I now rarely sleep during the day. I weighed 165 when I began testosterone injections, and now I weigh 185. I can squat more than 400 pounds.

I started reading up on the subject of testosterone. Testosterone is regarded as the definition of maleness, but both men and women produce it; men, however, produce much, much more of it. The effects of testosterone start early. At conception, every embryo is female. Testosterone turns a fetus with a Y chromosome into a real boy. The Book of Genesis got it backwards—man is created from woman.

Testosterone is clearly correlated in both men and women with psychological dominance, confident physicality, and self-esteem. A 1996 study found that in lesbian couples the one with the higher T level assumes the male role. A

1998 study found that trial lawyers have more testosterone than other lawyers. Put any two men in a room and the one with the higher level of testosterone tends to dominate.

When I was making these larger claims about testosterone, the researchers I spoke to on the subject seemed sort of puzzled and interested and very nervous, as scientists are about creating any controversy at all. One of the problems in this culture is our inability to talk about difference without implying inequality. It should be possible to adhere to strict political and civil equality while recognizing social and cultural differences.

I always have believed and still do in the rights of women to be in any field of activity they want on equal terms with men insofar as they can do the same job as a man can and vice versa. But I don't want to deny the reality that men and women are different and the data on the subject is enormous and fascinating and utterly ignored.

Many feminists have made tenacious arguments about the lack of any substantive physical or mental differences between men and women. You can understand why, of course—for too long, girls and women were second-class citizens. But a visit to any college campus today will show you how far we have come from those pernicious days. Now, arguably we are seeing the crisis of the male.

If we continue to deny the male identity, we will not be able to provide the proper education for noble and virtuous manhood. The word virtue springs from the Latin word *vir*—man—partly because of the sexism of the ancients, but nevertheless, this etymology shows that virtue meant being a man well, knowing how to be a good man.

Perhaps to some extent we are right to demonize manhood—it's a very worrying thing, it tends to be often very aggressive, dysfunctional, unable to communicate; we all know the problems that men have. But we must start from understanding that men have problems and advantages and then construct a system of education and virtue which allows us to become better men—what they used to call "gentlemen."

The essential educational task is to accept one's nature but to want to improve it, to guide it to the most profitable and fruitful flourishing of that identity. Being a noble woman will not be the same as being a noble man; though we share an enormous amount in common, there are some things that will never be the same. In other words, understanding reality and difference is the beginning, the necessary beginning, for a civilized human society—by denying our basic differences, we deny ourselves the possibility of a more civilized life. ◆

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The Token Man

Teens Behaving Badly

Gerald McOscar on guilt, regret, and boozy judgment

My sex needs to hire a press agent to offset the received wisdom that men can do no right and women can do no wrong.

Consider for a moment the facts surrounding a sensational incident last fall at a house party attended by about twenty-five high school students from Coatesville, Pennsylvania. A sixteen-year-old girl, who admitted to drinking four beers and five shots of vodka in little more than an hour, became sick and fell asleep in an upstairs bedroom. According to initial police reports, the girl was sexually assaulted there by five student-athletes from her school.

In the juvenile hearing, which was full of lurid testimony about sex and alcohol abuse, four of the boys accused testified that the sex was consensual; the fifth did not take the stand. The judge found that the girl, though conscious, was too intoxicated to consent to sex.

Four boys were found delinquent (the juvenile court equivalent of guilty) of sexual assault, while one was acquitted of all charges. All were acquitted of the charge of rape. Sentences were tailored to their roles in the incident, including probation until the age of twenty-one and/or weekends at a supervised camp. They had to admit responsibility in front of their peers, attend counseling sessions, apologize to the girl, and perform community service.

Was justice served? Some say that the punishment was too harsh, others that it was too lenient. No one is condoning the behavior of the boys. The only point that I wish to make is that the sexual assault the boys were found to have committed only recently became a crime in Pennsylvania, when in 1995 the Crimes Code was amended to make it a crime to have sexual relations with someone without his or her consent.

With force or threat of force not an element of the crime, sexual assault becomes a decidedly more vague, subjective, and ambiguous affair, much more a "he said, she said" proposition than rape and other sexual offenses. Sexual assault is a prosecutor's dream. A charge of sexual assault can provide the perfect cover for prim maidens waking up the morning after the night before in a strange bed beside a strange guy, with a pounding headache and little recollection of the night's events. Intentionally or unintentionally, it can be the morning-after pill for those desperate to find someone to blame for their second thoughts, guilt, regret, and boozy judgment.

The sixteen-year-old girl in the Coatesville case refuses to accept any responsibility, even though the judge found that no force was involved and her intoxication was voluntary (which is why there was no rape). She has yet to explain her conduct, preferring to play the victim. Her male classmates were hardly role models that night, but neither was she.

There is no place for double standards, sexual myths, and stereotypes in a society where men and women are truly equal. It does no good for parents and other adults to stick their heads into the sand when girls go astray while boys are made to pay. When, for instance, Dr. Joyce Brothers urges parents to protect their daughters against sexual predators in cyberspace, she inadvertently reveals her ignorance about what many teenaged girls are chatting about online, sometimes with their parents or teachers close at hand.

A lady friend of mine recently asked rhetorically if the women's movement hasn't transformed itself into nothing more than the not-so-noble ideal that women can do everything men can do—only more so. I hope not. But if the modern woman now prefers to think of herself as a blend of snakes and snails and puppy dog tails along with sugar and spice and everything nice, she must also be willing to accept the consequences. ◆

Gerald McOscar is a writer and attorney living in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

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On the Backs of Women

Minimum wage women are paying high union dues. Guess where the money goes? *Rael Jean Isaac* tells all

When New York power broker Charles Hughes traveled abroad, he took along his nearest and dearest. His entourage for a jaunt to Egypt, Prague, London, and Paris numbered fourteen family members. Hughes also threw legendary Christmas parties at swank New York hotels, which featured such Lucullan treats as roast suckling pig and sides of beef; there were rock bands, too, and one year Hughes hired a circus to entertain.

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Hughes was a New York union boss. Unfortunately, his lifestyle was made possible by a little-noticed form of the abuse of women: exploitation of women in low-paying jobs by high-living union officials. Accused by New York City's D.A.'s office of corruption, Hughes finally pleaded guilty, in April, to stealing $2 million from Local 372, which represents school cafeteria workers and crossing guards, the majority of whom are women.

For the privilege of being represented by Hughes, a cafeteria worker making around $11,000 a year paid union dues of $600. Hughes' local is one of fifty-six New York locals that make up New York's District Council 37, which, in turn, is part of the powerful American Federation of State, City, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the nation's second largest labor union.

Clarice Wilson is the flip side of the Charles Hughes saga: A black, single mother—now a grandmother—Wilson has been a member of Local 983, which represents motor vehicle drivers, for eight years. As a civilian employee of the police department, she daily tours construction sites throughout the five boroughs looking for violations. Over the years Wilson's dues have added up to around $3,500.

What did she get for her money? When Wilson was required to work overtime without being paid for it, she sent an SOS to Local 983; the union did not even bother to respond. "All that was necessary was for the union to sit down with management one on one to rectify that," she told me. "But when I'd call, it was always, 'He's not here. Can I take a message?' and they never got back to me." When she went to complain in person, there was nobody in the office but a secretary.

Another member of Wilson's local, Mark Rosenthal, a park trash collector, decided to challenge the unresponsive leadership by running for president of Local 983. Rosenthal received so many anonymous death threats and up-front intimidation from muscle men that his experiences sound like something out of *On the Waterfront*, the 1950s Marlon Brando movie about union corruption. After his entire slate was overwhelmingly defeated, Rosenthal approached New York District Attorney Robert Morgenthau.

As a result, Morgenthau launched an investigation that turned up widespread corruption (including the Hughes story) and vote fraud among union officials representing government workers. Despite the brouhaha, nobody made the connection: An overwhelmingly female membership was being exploited by overwhelmingly male leadership.

Morgenthau's team learned that stealing had been easy. Indeed, Hughes' attorney argued that the very ease of establishing the case against his client proved his innocence: Hughes' "mile long" paper trail showed he thought that he had done nothing wrong. More likely, it showed how invulnerable Hughes felt after three decades of being in power.

Hughes seemed to have nursed delusions of grandeur. He had used union clout and money to try to become something of a statesman, conducting a "peace mission" to Nicaragua and setting himself up as the patron of Ethiopian Jews in Israel. Hughes journeyed to the Caribbean to study disaster relief.

His international aspirations, however, did not make him forget the folks back home in Millen, Georgia, where Hughes built a $400,000 house. The local boy made good dispensed free holiday turkeys, paid for by his long-suffering New York local. This largesse sparked a mini-riot the year would-be turkey takers outnumbered the birds.

In contrast to the underpaid Clarice Wilson, the D.A.'s office found that Hughes received overtime pay for hours he hadn't worked—$685,000 (on top of an annual salary of $224,000). The local had also picked up $325,000 in Hughes' family credit card bills, $590,000 for attending union board meetings, and $163,000 from petty cash.

Small change by comparison, other officials (including Hughes' son and son-in-law) were accused of spending $10,000 of union funds in topless bars, and paying $78,000 for an expensive trip to the Super Bowl. No wonder that, despite collecting $19 million a year, in 1999 Hughes' local found itself $8 million in debt!

Hughes' final female victim deserves mention: His seventy-six-year-old secretary, Mildred Stephens, pleaded guilty to helping Hughes steal—she had taken nothing for herself. Stephens was placed on probation.

Alfred Diop headed Local 1549, DC 37's clerical workers union, for two decades. With 22,000 members, it is easily the largest local in DC 37. On dues from his overwhelmingly female membership—average salary $25,000—Diop maintained a Manhattan penthouse apartment costing $6,000 a month in the building housing DC 37's offices.

And how did he keep that big penthouse tidy? A cleaning service, to the tune of another $1,200-1,600 a month. According to the indictment, some of the money spent under this rubric may have gone for male prostitutes. And, despite having a neat pad,

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the D.A.'s office claims Diop ran up a bill for $162,000 staying in city hotels.

Diop traveled in style, too. An internal union investigation launched after the D.A.'s office began its series of indictments found that Diop rented Lincoln Town cars—another $135,000—even though he already had a car allowance of over $665 a month, spent $46,000 for clothing and jewelry, $82,000 for cameras and other electrical equipment, and $22,000 at pawnshops, all at union expense. In its June 1999 indictment, the D.A.'s office claimed Diop had walked off with an impressive total of $1.6 million through various schemes.

While Hughes and Diop were the biggest spenders—presiding over the lowest paid but largest locals—a substantial number of other DC 37 officials have been indicted. One sent his office the $15,000 bill for more than 200 visits to a Brooklyn short-stay motel ($53 for a four-hour tryst). Several engaged in a turkey kickback scheme: It was a tradition to give turkeys at holidays; the officials simply doubled the actual cost. These human turkeys then pocketed the difference.

Stanley Hill, then-director of District 37, negotiated a five-year contract with New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in 1995. The contract featured a provision that made it highly unwelcome to the low-salaried membership: a wage freeze for the first two years. Moreover, this contract would set the pattern for the city's contract with all the other municipal unions, from teachers to firemen. Angry members voted it down.

Apparently trying to avoid embarrassment, union officials used a variety of methods to alter the results. Mail-in votes were steamed open with irons, and "no" votes became "yes" votes. One local—where the minutes showed fewer than a hundred members had voted—reported 400 "yes" votes. Just in case, the final count was held off at one local (Diop's) until the rest were in, and the shortfall was then made up with phony votes. It was announced that the unpopular contract had been approved by a vote of 10,000 to 2,000. (Absent phony ballots, the clerical workers resoundingly defeated it.)

Immediately after the fraudulent contract vote, the leadership raised members' dues across the board, with director Hill explaining the raise as "a clear mandate that we must not reduce our efforts to protect the interests of our members." Though not personally accused of corruption, but rather of letting it flourish around him, Hill has been forced to step down.

As things stand, says Kenneth Boehm, chairman of the National Legal and Policy Center, heading a DC 37 local is virtually "a license to steal." Nor does its parent union AFSCME seem interested in the structural reforms that would make corruption less likely, including direct election of union officers, independent auditing of local accounts, and opening up audited accounts to member scrutiny, among others. True, national headquarters sent a trustee to take over DC 37 when the D.A.'s findings made intervention inevitable, but when the trustee selected fourteen members of a new executive board (the old executive board was a who's who of indictments), he deliberately excluded the reformers.

Political leaders, especially Democratic Party leaders who benefit from millions of dollars in donations from AFSCME and its locals, not to mention its phone banks on election eves, are of no mind to take on the unions. Both Al Gore and Hillary Clinton made pilgrimages to DC 37 headquarters at the height of the indictments; neither said a word about the situation. That's scarcely surprising in the case of Gore since AFSCME is headed by Gerald McEntee, a key supporter. As for Hillary, her vaunted concern for poor women was nowhere in evidence.

As women become an ever larger proportion of organized labor, its (largely male) leaders strive to appeal to them with "women's rights departments," conferences on women's issues, campaigns against sexual harassment and domestic violence, and most recently a large-scale survey of the opinions of working women. In a rousing speech at a "Working Women 2000" conference in Chicago on March 11, John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, announced the chief finding of the union's survey of working women: Asked what they wanted most out of their jobs, said Sweeney, women "answered with one word, 'respect.'" He declared his "outrage" that "working women are far too often being treated like the doormats of our economy."

What women union members require from their leaders are not women's rights departments and rhetorical allegiance to trendy causes popular with middle-class professional women. "Respect" means above all respect for their hard-earned dues and for their voices, whether expressed in voting for officers of their locals or for the contracts negotiated on their behalf. "Respect" means first and foremost that their own leaders cease using them as doormats for their personal and political agendas. ◆

Rael Jean Isaac's most recent book, Madness in the Streets: How Psychiatry and the Law Abandoned the Mentally Ill *(co-authored with Virginia Armat) is published by the Free Press.*

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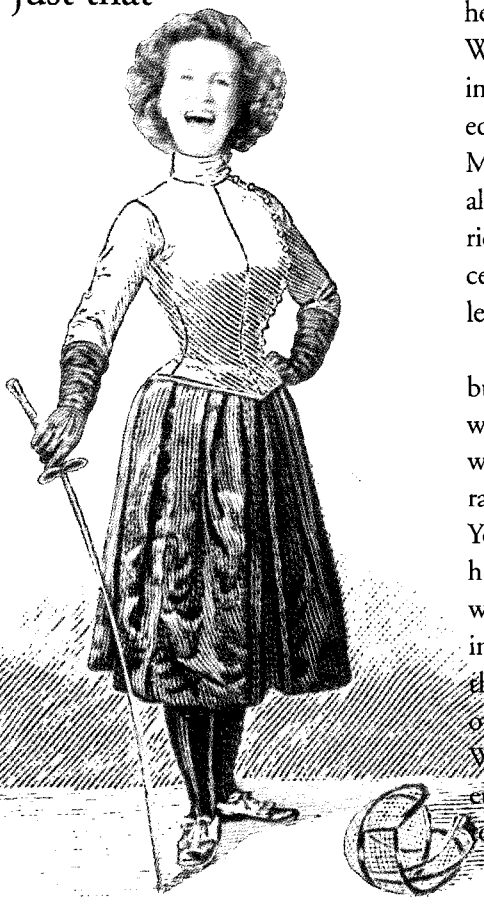
Dowager Power: Marylou Flexes Her Muscles

It takes a Whitney to take on the avant-garde Whitney Museum of American Art. *Jon Newlin* praises steely coquette Marylou Whitney for doing just that



BENEFACTRESS, sporting woman, gadfly, world-class flirt, steel magnolia from Kansas City, cookbook author, widow (and sole heir) of the legendary Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney, Marylou Whitney, seventy-three, is an old-fashioned girl at heart. Mrs. Whitney's late husband, Cornelius Vanderbilt "Sonny" Whitney, had gone through three wives by the time he married Marylou. Very fond of the company of ladies, 'C.V.' led a life crowded with incident and accomplishment—the two don't always go together. He met Marylou, former host of "Private Smiles," a popular Kansas City radio show for servicemen, when she auditioned for a role in *The Missouri Traveler*, a movie C.V. was producing. At the time, Marylou was in the process of obtaining a divorce from her first husband, an alcoholic.

What followed is best described by Cleveland Amory: "In 1958 Whitney was divorced for the third time in a particularly messy action after which, within a few hours, he married for the fourth time. The first that Mrs. Whitney No.3 knew of Mrs. Whitney No.4 was via a press conference held by Whitney in which he said that she was 'married to the telephone, a social career, and a love of luxury.'" (The third Mrs. Whitney became a traveling evangelist, who preached in Africa with the Rev. Billy Graham.)

Mrs. Whitney No.4, on the other hand, seems to have been married not to the telephone or love of luxury but to Mr. Whitney, with whom her life was most agreeable. She pampered him outrageously. C.V. began each day with a love letter on his breakfast tray. "I thought of every day with Sonny as a play," she once remarked. "All right, the curtain is going up. I want to be as good as I can be." Whitney died in 1992, leaving Marylou $100 million and a string of seven houses.

Marylou's romantic third marriage to John Hendrickson, a man decades younger, hardly fits the stereotype of the rich older lady/younger man. "He's obsessed with her," a business associate said. Indeed, they can't stop looking at each other. When Hendrickson, a lad in his thirties, represented his wife in selling a pristine parcel of Adirondacks wilderness to the state of New York, his strong-arm tactics led to recurrent suggestions that Hendrickson, more pit bull than Pomeranian, was doing Marylou's dirty work.

Marylou does not exactly deny this. "Yes," she purred to *New York* magazine, "John did do some of the dirty work. But isn't that what a man does?"

In a more mannerly world, absolutely. In a more mannerly world, however, Marylou Whitney would not have been forced to take up arms this spring against the museum that bears her revered late husband's name—the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. The Whitney was founded by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, Marylou's mother-in-law. Gertrude already was dead when Marylou married C.V.; nevertheless Marylou feels a certain fealty to Gertrude Whitney's legacy.

An artist herself—generally of robust male figures—Gertrude Whitney was a remarkable woman. She bought widely and generously of contemporary artists, and in 1929 offered New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art her entire collection of six hundred works by American artists. The Met indicated that it had "a cellar full" of that kind of thing and rejected the offer. In November of 1931, Gertrude Whitney opened the Whitney Museum of American Art in four redone town houses on Eighth Street.

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Although Gertrude's tastes were largely figurative, thus conservative, she strenuously applied herself to an appearance, at least, of bohemianism. But even Gertrude, accustomed to surrounding herself with the riotous and bacchanalian poverty of Greenwich Village artists, would have lowered her veil at some of the horrors perpetrated by the Whitney in the name of that particular designer version of the Emperor's New Clothes called the "cutting edge" or the "transgressive."

For Marylou, the final outrage was Hans Haacke's "Sanitation," an exhibit that compared New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani to the Nazis. The oeuvre is described in one news magazine as being Haacke's response to Giuliani's attempt to cut off public funding to the Brooklyn Museum over some tasteless nonsense it showed last fall under the self-referential rubric "Sensation." The *pièce de résistance* was a Virgin Mary splattered with elephant dung.

Haacke's new piece includes quotes from Giuliani set in German gothic type (get it?) and the sounds of marching (not goose-stepping?) troops. The floor is littered with quotations from the supposedly trampled upon First Amendment.

Risking the public accusation of philistinism—actually a badge of honor in the art world today, it seems to me—Marylou has dared to criticize such a work of art as grotesque, tasteless, and inartistic and to yank the funding that she provides for the museum and cut it out of her will.

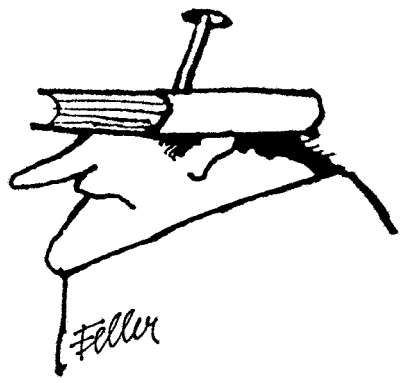
"The museum is free to associate itself with trash," she told the *New York Post*, "but I have a right not to be associated with it. My name is Whitney, so people will think I approved of this, but I don't approve of anything that incites hate."

She is detouring the bequest she might have given the Whitney to another museum founded by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, the Whitney Gallery of Western Art in Cody, Wyoming, which has at its entrance an enormous statue of Buffalo Bill Cody sculpted by Gertrude. Less cutting-edge? More conservative? Sure. That's why they probably could use the inheritance to better effect than the house of torture at Madison and 75th. ◆

Jon Newlin is a writer living in New Orleans.

The Original Angry White Male

When Betty Friedan accused ex-husband Carl Friedan of being a wife-beater in her recent autobiography, *Life So Far*, he hit back—with a website (carlfriedan.com) devoted to *his* version of marital bliss with the feminist movement founder.



Described in an irresistible *George* magazine headline as "Battling for Women While Being Beaten at Home," Betty claimed in the book that Carl had "started beating up on me. It seemed as if I never went on a television show in those days without a black eye I had to cover with makeup. I realize now he must have been jealous with rage and envy."

Not so, avers Carl: Betty was the abusive partner. In an entry headlined "Living with Insanity," Carl, an eighty-year-old former ad executive, who writes with a sort of bitter verve, remembers Betty's shocking outbursts, including one that ended in the police station.

The Friedans had just enjoyed a pleasant dinner with friends. In the car, Betty "suddenly started screaming at me, 'You never took me to Europe, you cheap [deleted].'" Betty allegedly propped herself against the passenger side and repeatedly kicked him.

When he stopped the car, Carl claims that his wife "went shrieking up and down the highway" and then returned and "started mauling me all over with her claws." Finally, Betty found a phone to call the police. "The sergeant at the desk looked me over, pointed to my gouging and asked, 'Where did you get all that?' My wounds were far greater than hers."

Carl also claims while the couple was renting the Fire Island cottage of author Theodore White, Betty went on an unprovoked rampage, and "with the unbridled fury of a madman" broke twenty-seven windows.

On a lighter note, Carl Friedan claims that after he spurned her advances in a hotel in Mexico, the feminist icon ran up and down the corridors, shouting that her husband was "a [bleeped] homosexual."

Carl says that he spent "hours of psychoanalysis" trying to muster the courage to end the marriage. They have been divorced for thirty years. ◆

 Drawing by Ludvik Feller

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The Real Skinny On Why We Feel Fat

Meghan Cox Gurdon says it's not the models who make us feel fat. It's the clothes

THERE HAS BEEN a great gnashing of teeth in Britain, of late, over the apparently fateful role played in the lives of ordinary young women by skinny fashion models. The Women's Unit of Britain's Labour government has been holding a rolling series of "summits" with fashion editors and modeling agents to discuss how government bureaucrats can alleviate feelings of dismay in girls who read glossy magazines. The British Medical Association has weighed in with a warning that "young women may compare themselves to extremely thin models and perceive themselves as fat in comparison."

Tessa Jowell, Britain's exquisitely named Minister for Women, is unequivocal: "Young women are tired of feeling second rate because they can't match the thin ideal they see in the media." She adds, insightfully, "Poor body image can lead to low self-esteem."

Both Minister "Dewlap" and the BMA have called on fashion editors to use "realistic" girls in their photo shoots, though given the increasing beefiness of the general population, one wonders just how Rubenesque such models would have to be. "Female models are becoming thinner at a time when women are becoming heavier," the BMA observes, "And the gap between the ideal body shape and reality is wider than ever."

The gap isn't the only thing getting wider; so are backsides on both sides of the Atlantic. More than half of America's women are overweight or obese, making the disparity between the fleshless beauties of fashion-land and the lard-loads hauling themselves down Main Street indeed cruel and astonishing. Never before has the vast bulk of American womanhood been so…vastly bulky. Never before, paradoxically, have women been so obsessed with muscle definition, body mass index, or the Atkins Diet. Personal trainers haven't been seen in these numbers since the wrestling matches of classical Greece.

Now, I have no brief to defend fashion models. Of course they're unrepresentative; they're taller, prettier, and better groomed than almost everyone else. That's why they're models. Sure, they're skinny. And why is that? Because modern clothes look best on skinny women. Even some famously slender models aren't thin enough to carry off today's tastes: Two years ago Chanel model Karen Elson (32-24-34) was dropped from Dolce & Gabbana's Milan runway because she was thought "too fat" for the clothes.

Modern womanhood is caught in a trap of its own making; we are hoist by our own petard. It is female emancipation that has put us on diets and treadmills. Before you throw this magazine down in disgust, consider that the more economic and political power

Drawing by Yuri Kolyadenko

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women have acquired, the fewer clothes we have worn; the fewer clothes, the less friendly concealment. That is why our bodies, themselves, have come to be of such supreme—and exasperating—importance.

Say what you will about corsets, they at least gave every woman a waist and made a pleasing contrast with zaftig hips. In olden days, the contours of one's calves, let alone one's thighs, mattered not at all, for they were veiled in sumptuous layers of skirting. Rich or poor, chunky or sylphlike, all women used to wear garb which conveyed femininity whilst concealing womanhood's more problematic hip-thigh-buttock zone. Not only were women's pillowy backsides hidden from male eyes, they were also hidden from those of their owners. And if you can't see your thighs, why would you worry about them? My guess is that most women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries passed their whole lives without once scrutinizing their cellulite. (Our great-grandmothers didn't even have a name for it; according to Webster's, "cellulite" only entered the language in 1974.)

The erosion of this happy state can be discerned in photographs of early suffragettes, whose narrower, more trouser-like skirts presaged the end of the protective petticoats enjoyed by countless generations. After the first World War, modernity crashed across the civilized landscape, laying waste to such antediluvian conventions as whalebone stays and floor-sweeping skirts. Fast-forward to the forties, to Rosie the Riveter and the corrupting influence of Lauren Bacall, her boyish flanks clad daringly in slacks, and—well! suddenly, thighs mattered. The awful truth is that, in trousers, womanly thighs have a tendency to rub together, to cause fabric to bunch publicly and unflatteringly between them. The Delta of Venus becomes an eye-catching wrinkle-fest. So when women decided to wear the pants in the family, it was just a matter of time before it put us on the StairMaster.

Mind you, there was a brief postwar hiatus. Feminists naturally deplore the displacement of Rosie and the other she-riveters by the returning GIs, but from a sartorial point of view it was one of the high points of the twentieth century. Women leapt out of their boiler suits and into Dior's New Look, with its teenage knock-off corollary, the poodle skirt. Pretty housewives swirled into new suburbs in their wasp-waisted, full-skirted frocks, raising babies and leaving the salary-earning to the menfolks. Had this continued uninterrupted, perhaps leggings might never have emerged as the blight they are. But no. Come the feminist movement, and North America was awash in indigo blue. Those women who didn't squeeze into jeans wore miniskirts; a rare few burnt their brassieres in what must surely be the most foolishly self-defeating act of liberation ever. The centuries-old, universally flattering silhouette of a bodice set off by long, flowing skirts was gone, phut.

Stroll through a department store these days and all is spaghetti straps, halter-tops, handkerchief hemlines, and shiny, bump-revealing techno-fabrics. Stretchy tee-shirts labeled "large" would be snug on my slim six-year-old daughter. The clothes currently in vogue suit really only the slenderest women; they look best of all on—surprise!—models. So while evermore-Pilates-honed actresses cavort in shrunken tops and shantung capris, the rest of us open our closets in the morning and despair. For a fashion-conscious woman packing too many pounds, the suffering is worse. For her, no amount of diaphanous fabric can make a slip dress slinky.

We have all become slaves to fashion, whether we're actually toiling away at the gym, or merely scowling at our dimpled and sedentary reflections.

Now, whatever excitable readers may say, I would not wish away the past century of female advancement, nor do I advocate a forcible return to corsetry. It is, however, time for a new female emancipation. We should fling our leggings on to the pyre, and follow the advice of F. Scott Fitzgerald. In a letter to his young niece, Fitzgerald instructed her to determine what looked best on her and to stick to it whatever fashion might otherwise dictate. Surely twenty-first-century women can deploy their titanic spending power to the same effect.

For centuries, women wisely wore garments that accentuated the graceful contours of the female form whilst concealing its jiggly bits. It could happen again. Here and there one sees a tentative magazine piece about a renaissance in "foundation wear." The word "girdle" even pops up occasionally. And is there not a subtext of resurgent modesty in the now-waning rage for pashmina shawls?

Today women make more money, and are courted more assiduously than ever in history by politicians (though less assiduously by men). Women govern, run companies, adjudicate lawsuits, and, in Britain, operate their own special taxpayer-funded unit. So why is it that from dressing rooms across the English-speaking world comes the querulous cry: "Do these pants make me look fat?" ◆

Meghan Cox Gurdon is a writer living in Canada.

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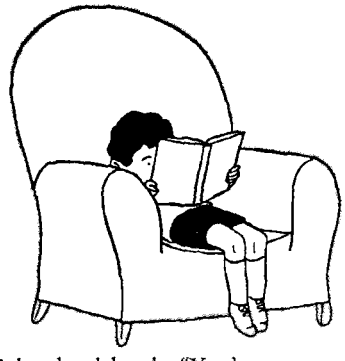
One last observation . . .

Death, Divorce, and Dismemberment—What Kids Are Reading Today

Julia Duin says if they weren't miserable before reading this fare, they will be afterwards



The Harry Potter rage may have lulled some parents into thinking that the children's books market is dominated by similar confections of fantasy, magic, and other PG-rated high jinks emanating from the likes of the Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry.

But they would be wrong. Horribly wrong. Many popular juvenile (eight to twelve) and young adult (thirteen and older) books are so grim than Ann Tobias, a literary agent specializing in children's books, has given the genre a name: "Four D Books," because death, divorce, drugs, and dismemberment are among the most popular themes. Tobias claims that kids love to read this stuff "because they are so miserable."

If they aren't miserable before reading these gems, they will be afterwards. Here are some popular titles for teens:

I Was a Teenage Fairy, by Francesca Lia Block, isn't about Tinker Bell. Instead, the title character is a teen model, who is lured into drugs, sex, and alcohol by a rapacious pedophile. Heart-warming.

Dancing on the Edge, by Han Nolan, winner of both a National Book Award and a Parent's Choice Storybook Award, is about Miracle McCloy, a teen with occult powers. When a spell backfires, Miracle ends up in a mental ward.

Speak, by Laurie Halse Anderson, is the sordid saga of a girl who becomes mute after being raped by a drunken high-school hunk. "You're one strange b——," he tells her as he tries a second assault. This time her voice returns, and she has time to get help.

Deal with It! A Whole New Approach to Your Body, Brain, and Life as a Gurl, a Christmas selection last year, helps teens overcome prejudices by enlightening them on such matters as how lesbians engage in sexual activity. For lads and lasses with more traditional temptations, there are some helpful hints on diagnosing sexually transmitted diseases.

Unfortunately, the literary offerings in the juvenile category are just as awful:

Wringer, by Jerry Spinelli, a Newberry Medal winner, is set in a town where the boys are expected to take part in the annual Pigeon Day, when adults kill innocent little birds. After befriending a pigeon, one boy wants to stop the killing. This is no *Charlotte's Web*—there are gruesome descriptions of wringing pigeons' necks.

Making Up Megaboy, by Virginia Walter, features a thirteen-year-old antihero who calmly shoots a Korean grocer. Why, oh why, did he do it? The rest of the book is devoted to musings on this question by a reporter, teachers, a social worker, and the grocer's widow.

The Giver, by Lois Lowry, is set in a futuristic society with strict population control. Jonah learns that his little brother was a twin, but his father had to kill one by lethal injection: "As he continued to watch, the child, no longer crying, moved his arms and legs in a jerking motion." This book is assigned in upper elementary and middle schools.

Small wonder that children are flocking to Harry Potter! Whatever the motives of the misguided adults who are inflicting these atrocities on kids, the children are showing—with a little help from J.K. Rowling—that their tastes haven't changed much from the days of *Dr. Doolittle* and his talking animals. ◆

Julia Duin is an assistant national editor at the Washington Times. *She is author of a children's book*, Waiting for True Love *(Chariot-Victory).*

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